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/Information on the tarawad as a matrilineal joint family will be found in category 613./

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/For information on the function of the Taravād as a clan, lineage and matrilineal household unit, the researcher is advised to check all three categories listed above./

421 was headed by its oldest male member (karanavan) who was the legal guardian of all members and represented them in the local subcaste assembly. When spoken of in its own right the property-group, like the lineage, was called a taravad; when spoken of as a segment of the lineage it was called a tavari (lit. - "mother's line"). Tavari could also be used of any intermediate segment of the lineage or of a minimal segment of one [54] mother and her children within the property-group had a separate garden name in addition to its lineage-name: each individual was called by his taravad-name, property-group name, personal name and caste-title (e.g., Kolangatt Thekkedil Govindan Nayar - "In the place of the bathing pool, the southern side, Govindan Nayar.")

421 592 Usually, a property-group owned only one house and was simultaneously a dwelling group. In wealthier desavari and naduvari lineages, however, a group which increased in size might build two or more adjacent houses. In some cases a minimal segment descended from one sister occupied each of these houses, and cooking was separate. Much more commonly, the two adjacent houses would be used indiscriminately by all members, cooking being carried on in only one.

592 342 A traditional house of the retainer or desavari subcastes comprises a central large building with two storeys, separate staircases for men and women, and in the centre of it a separate courtyard open to the sky. The house faces east and is fronted by a spacious verandah used

592 (except for cleaning) only by men of the group
342 and their male visitors. Within, a passage leads to the central courtyard, round which
[352] rooms open off on two or three sides. These include the ancestor-shrine of the group, several store-rooms for clothing, vessels and paddy (stored in carved wooden chests), one or more bed- and [55] sitting-rooms each containing a bedroll, bench, wooden stools and a rope to hang clothes; and a small room used by women during their delivery and menstrual seclusions. Beyond the courtyard to the west is a long narrow dining hall with a large kitchen behind it, and behind this the back verandah occupied only by servants, women and children. Upstairs may be four or five empty bedrooms in which women receive their visiting husbands. Men born into the group seldom enter the upstairs' rooms and may not use the women's staircase.

[427] Outside in the courtyard a separate building
[987] may be devoted to storing paddy paid as rents
[343] by the group's tenants. The upstairs of the building is often set aside for the karanavan's[1] use; here he sleeps, is served with food by women of the house, entertains his friends and keeps records of the group's economic transactions. If the group is large, a second separate building is often reserved for junior men to sleep, read and entertain friends when they are
593 not visiting their wives. In village headmen's
342 and chiefly property-groups whose women often have Nambudiri husbands, a separate building with its own kitchen, granary and Brahman

[1] [Eldest man of the property-group - Analyst]

593 servants is set aside at the expense of the tara-
342 vad to entertain these men when they visit their wives, sometimes for two or three days at a time.

351 The buildings and courtyard are surrounded
515 by a shady garden of coconut, jackfruit, cashew
[343] nut and mango trees. Chiefs and village headmen have a private bathing pool with stone steps running round it in their own garden; retainer [56] Nayars more often bathe in the large public bathing pools attached to the temples and reserved for "clean" castes of the village. Men and women bathe and swim daily in public clad in a loin-cloth, on opposite sides of the pool.
[526] Both boys and girls become excellent swimmers and divers almost as soon as they can walk.

351 In the southeast corner of the garden is an
[764] open space set aside as the group's cremation
[778] ground, while at another corner is a dense shrubbery devoted to the snake-gods of the group, in which small stone images of cobras are set up.

421 The property-group was traditionally a cor-
●592 porate group in other sense than those in which
672 this term applied to the lineage. Whereas the lineage was held responsible in cases of offence against religious law (sins, or crimes against the village community), the property-group was responsible in cases of debt or theft (torts). The headman, on behalf of the group, must make restitution for such offences from the group's jointly owned funds. In addition, as representative of the group in the assembly, he must pay annual dues to the temple funds. Through its headman, the group also acted as a single legal personality in the payment of wages to its

421 servants and serfs, of rents to the janmi, and
592 the receipt of rents from tenants. Today in law
672 as it was codified by the British the legal personality of the property-group is clearly recognized: suits concerning property-disputes, for example, are filed in the name of a property-group and not of its karanavan as an individual.

592 (b) Ritual Observances of the Group

Besides having important legal functions, the property-group was united in rites of various kinds. Its members acted jointly as a host-
[561] group in inviting neighbouring groups of the village to rites de passage such as name-giving (28th day), first rice-feeding (6th month) and the ceremonies associated with a death. At the tali-
[796] rite, the lineage as a whole held the ceremony in its oldest house, but expenses were divided between the property-groups and food for the feasts
[764] cooked separately in their houses. Similarly at a death, the whole lineage observed pollution and attended the cremation, gathering of bones and ashes on the 7th day, and purification and feasting on the 15th day, but members of the property-group, male and female, each made offerings of cooked rice to the spirit in their
[765] courtyard each day during the pollution period. The rites of chief mourner were performed by the man considered most closely related to the deceased - her eldest son in the case of a woman, and the man next younger to him in the property-group, in the case of a man,

592 The propitiation of snakes and of dead male
782 forbears also united the group's members. The

592 782 nagas or cobra-deities which were believed to guard each group were housed in the snake-grove in a corner of the garden and annually given offerings of milk and eggs by the karanavan in the presence of members. As well as warding 592 782 off ordinary sickness and misfortune they were particularly [58] believed responsible for the fertility or barrenness of taravad women. Special offerings were made to them if a woman failed to conceive, and a performance was held a at which men and women of a low caste called Pulluvar played instruments and sang songs to [787] entice the snakes in the grove to appear. A group of women of the taravad, after purifying themselves by fasting and sex-continence for several days previously, then became possessed by the snake-gods (who are said to have "entered into them") and performed a wild dance, bowing and swaying in a circle and sweeping their hair along the ground. In this condition they might speak with the voice of the snakes and announce what propitiations were necessary to appease [158] them. Sometimes the ceremony ended with one or more women falling into a fit. It seems 592 fairly certain that the snake-gods were (as so 786 commonly elsewhere) worshipped as phallic symbols. Since they were definitely not regarded as the spirits of dead matrilineal forbears, but were capable of alternately withholding fertility from taravad women or causing them to conceive, it is a plausible guess that they collectively symbolized the procreative powers of past genitors of the property-group, who had been so essential to its perpetuation yet

592 so firmly excluded from participation in its ev-
782 eryday affairs. If this were so we would have
[152] evidence that the Nayars, in spite of their extreme emphasis on the matrilineal line, virtual sexual promiscuity within the caste, and minimal recognition of paternity, had an Oedipus Complex [59] which caused men to fear and propitiate the phallic representatives of their fathers, and women to have fantasies about "possession" by paternal phallic symbols. Unfortunately snake worship is now practically extinct; I never saw it, and found present-day informants able to make few associations about it.

592 If the snake-gods were, at least unconsciously,
782 collective "fathers" of the taravad, it is inter-
831 esting that they were represented in an archaic, dream-like form as snakes (pure phallic animal symbols) robbed of their human attributes. This would accord with the fact that Oedipal hostility of the father, which must have been experienced by Nayar children since they slept, and do today, in the mother's room till age four or five and have opportunity to witness parental intercourse, would be repressed before latency and leave its mark only in unconscious phallic fantasies about the father which could be translated into the cultural idiom of beliefs about harmful snake-gods. Such archaic representations contrast with the less distorted ones of male forbears of the taravad.

592 These latter comprise only the spirits of dead
769 karanavans of the property-group, not of men
778 who died without attaining to headship, and very seldom of women. (5) In each house, a room

592 devoted to dead karanavans' spirits, opening off
769 the inner courtyard, contains a number of small
778 wooden stools on which the spirits are believed to come and sit. In those branches of the taravad which have remained in situ for many generations, retaining [60] an old ancestral house while collateral segments hived off into new ones (6), the ancestor shrine contains many stools, placed in order and named with the names of the karanavans going back to the first of the segment or of the lineage as a whole. In newer houses built by segments which have recently left the parent house there may be only one or two, starting with the stool of the man who built the house and was its first karanavan.(7) Offerings of cooked good, with delicacies of the kind most enjoyed by the recipient during his lifetime, are made before each stool by the living karanavan, in the presence of all members, twice annually on the new moon days of April-
592 May and October-November. The spirits of
769 dead karanavans are thought of as vindictive and
152 fearsome, ever prone to take offence against living members who fail in any of the details of ritual performances and general care of the taravad house and lands which are their duty, and to vent hostility on them out of all proportion to their offence. They are placated with fear and reverence but without affection. Their character contrasts with that of the patrilineal ancestral spirits of Tamil Brahmans, who are thought of as harmless, straving, lonely, pitiful beings who must be given food to sustain them in the life in the world of the dead. This

592 difference in the character of ancestral spirits
769 probably relates to the fact that among Nayars,
152 hostility to the mother's brother, the karanavan and all older men, though curbed by strict rules of etiquette and [61] social distance, is often either fully conscious or dealt with by projection: the mother's brother may be thought of as persecuting and his discipline strongly resented, though loyalty to the mother and the group prevents a man from openly venting his aggression. Among Brahmans, aggressive impulses against the father, elder brothers and other older men are deeply repressed; such older male figures are thought of a protective and nurturant, and inner opposition to them arouses much guilt. Perhaps because of this, their spirits are also harmless, and what is projected in beliefs about them is rather the individual's own oral dependency longings.

592 The propitiation only of heads of the property-
769 groups, by the living head on behalf of all members, underlines the corporate character of the group. Brahmans instead propitiate each man his own line of recent patrilineal forbears - father, paternal grandfather and great-grandfather and their wives - thus emphasizing the strength of the asymmetrical interpersonal tie between father and son, at the expense of the
592 solidarity of the patrilineal group. Among Na-
602 yars, interpersonal relations between men of the matrilineal group are neither structurally strong nor emotionally intense: men are bound to the group and incidentally to each other by their primary ties to women (mother and sisters); rivalry between them is acute and they are kept

592 602 together only by loyalty to the group as a whole and a sense of pride in being able to submit to discipline from male elders for the sake of their natal kinswomen. A man may be extremely proud of his taravad and of his karanavan as a good manager and spokesman, but he has a less intimate personal relationship with him than does a patrilineal man with his father. In the Brahman patrilineal extended family, by contrast, individual interpersonal ties between father and son and between brothers, who form the core of the group, may be marked by deep devotion, while loyalty to the patrilineal lineage as a corporate unit, and its overall solidarity, are much weaker.

592 571 (c) The Splitting of Property-Groups

The property-groups of retainer Nayars divide at a particular point in their development. The Nayars themselves do not know this. They regard partition of the property-group as an unfortunate occurrence which takes place because of the greed or envy of individual men, or because of unwonted increase in the membership of the group. It is true that before the increase in population of the hundred years, individual property-groups must often have remained intact over many generations, simply reproducing their numbers. However, genealogies from the histories I collected of over thirty taravads show that retainer property-groups in fact partition with unfailing regularity at a particular point in their development. This occurs when the group contains two or more segments descended

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571 from sisters, whose maternal uncles and brothers are all dead, and when each segment has an adult son or [63] grandson old enough to become karanavan in his own right. Since the armies were disbanded and men came home to live on their estates (about 1810), it is probable that groups have partitioned slightly more quickly than they formerly did, for over the past hundred years men have considered themselves old enough to become karanavans of new groups (if their uncles and older brothers are all dead) by the age of 30 to 40, whereas they appear traditionally to have been still in the army until about the age of 50. But the structure of the group at its time of partition appears to have been the same at all periods until the most recent(discussed later.) Traditionally, as long as the karanavan is own brother, mother's brother or mother's mother's brother to all members of the group, partition cannot take place, because men cannot separate from their mothers and sisters. A sibling group can never split into two, nor a junior man secede from his own mother's brother: the relationship between these men is an inter-personal one and they are within the same minimal segment of the lineage. Partition can take place only between men of different minimal segments (parallel cousins, a man and his classificatory mother's brother, etc.) who are no longer held together by common submission to a living karanavan of the parental or grandparental generation, and whose relationship is therefore structured in terms of the relationship between groups.

592 [64] Every woman is thus the potential founder
571 of a property-group, and often, after her brothers have in turn been karanavans and are dead, she lives to see her segment's property divided from that of her sisters, and her son or even daughter's son established as head of her group. However, some women do not of course become founders of groups, either because they have no children or because they have only daughters who themselves become founders in their own right when their sons are old enough. Again, a group of brothers with no sisters was traditionally unlikely to form a separate group, since they would have no women to perpetuate their group(or for that matter, to cook for them). They would be likely to remain volunatrily attached to a parallel segment, succeeding, along with their classificatory brothers, to karanavanship as they became in turn oldest member of the group. Alternatively they might split away and adopt one or more girls from collateral segments to perpetuate their separate group.

In all cases of partition, division of the property was stirpital: equal shares accrued to segments of the same order which were descended from sisters. The segment which contained the old karanavan at the time of partition usually retained the ancestral house.

592(d) Kinship Relations within the Group
602 The karanavan was traditionally unequivocal
868 head of the group. He managed the property, built new houses, repaired the old, leased land from the janmi, and controlled [65] the labour

592 of serfs. He could command all other members,
602 male or female, and children were trained to
868 obey him with reverence. He[1] had the rights of a pater over small children: till puberty he was responsible for having them educated in Malayalam reading and writing, must discipline them like a father in patriliny, and might beat them if they disobeyed. Even today in orthodox
[593] houses, the father of a child has no share at all in the karanavan's rights of pater: he may not interfere in education or discipline or question the karanavan's right to dispose of a child's career and services.

As their legal guardian, the karanavan must traditionally pass on to young men the martial traditions, swords and other weapons of the taravad. He must educate them also in the management of lands and serfs and the cultivation of gardens. Even today in villages, every Nayar has expert knowledge of paddy and garden cultivation and the planning of household architecture. Such information is learned with great care from the karanavan and younger brothers of the mother, all of whom play a part in the child's education after the age of four to five. In spite of interpersonal rivalry between men, Nayars show great loyalty to the group as a whole, pride in the military skill, dignity and financial integrity of their karanavans of past ages, and eagerness to identify with their mothers' brothers and eventually take their place as leaders of the property-group. This pride in the offices and public status of the group is of course most marked in royal lineages, [66] but

1 [the Karanavan --- Analyst]

592 602 868 it occurs in subcastes as low as washermen, funeral priests and barbers, among whom all tasks are traditionally learnt from the mother's brothers. The handing on of skills in the matri-
592 602 828 lineal line goes along with the traditional belief that men of a taravad resemble each other in character, as indeed they often do. Some groups are characterized as bold and fearless in fighting; others as cautious with money; others as good arbitrators in disputes, friendly to all men;
[827] others as unusually intelligent. Individuals are also expected to resemble their fathers (as well as their mothers) physiologically, for the Nayars are not ignorant of the male role in procreation; but character, which they prize greatly, is rightly thought to be transmitted from men to their sisters' sons.

592 602 671 It seems probable that the karanavan's powers were limited by the codification of law which came about during British rule. It is not certain whether he could traditionally alienate land without the consent of other adults of the group. During British rule he could not. British law also permitted appeal to the court by junior members for the removal of a karanavan who could be shown guilty of gross mismanagement. He could then be set aside on a pension in favour of the next younger man. An inefficient karanavan could moreover be forced by court order to maintain accounts of his income and expenditure; since 1933 in Malabar District and 1938 in Co[illegible] all karanavans are legally obliged to do this and to make available their accounts for inspection by junior members [67] once a year. However,

592 602 671 few juniors avail themselves of this right, which is evidently repugnant to the traditional ideals of obedience and trust towards elders of the taravad.

592 602 695 421 Even traditionally, however, both junior men and women were often consulted in the management of property. If a dispute arose between segments within the group, it was common for appeal to be made to an arbitrator outside the lineage, and a settlement reached and embodied in a document called a karar, which legally bound all adult members. Such a settlement was likely in the case of a very old karanavan who decided to retire in favour of the second man. In a wealthy taravad he might then by common consent be allotted a small house and pension for the duration of his life. In desavari and naduvari taravads, karars were sometimes made to allot separate houses with lands for the maintenance of each of the old women of the group (often the karanavan's own sisters) to live on with their children and grandchildren. All lands continued to be managed by the karanavan, but he paid a sum of paddy from her allotted lands each year to the senior woman of each segment. If one sibling group in a taravad contained only brothers, a karar was sometimes made to allot to them a separate house with lands for the duration of their lives; this then reverted to the group as a whole after their deaths. Karars are however common only in village headmen's, chiefly or royal taravads: too little property is usually 592 involved in the taravads of retainer Nayars. 602 Here effective management is commonly divided

592 between the karanavan and the oldest woman.
602 The former carries out all economic transactions outside the group and controls the total income; he also keeps the key of the outer granary in the courtyard. The latter plans cookery, keeps the keys of paddy chests within the house, organized the work of women and presents to the karanavan her requirements for day-to-day expenditures. (8) Particularly when the karanavan is the son or own younger brother of the oldest woman, management runs smoothly and the oldest woman may be de facto head of the group. If she is a younger sister or classificatory sister a more formal division of roles is common.

[601] Under the karanavan, men of the group are ranked by seniority. All those older than ego are sometimes collectively called karanavar and are accorded respect and obedience (within the limits set by overall obedience to the head) all younger, whether they be mother's brothers, younger brothers, maternal nephews or great nephews, may be commanded and disciplined. The social distance between men of a property-group is great, far greater than between father and son, or between brothers, in any patrilineal South Indian group. Indeed, though learning and skills are passed on between them, the relationships between men are, when possible, formalized to the point of avoidance. By traditional etiquette, a man may not touch his karanavan or any maternal uncle; before approaching him he must remove his upper cloth. To speak to the karanavan he stands respectfully half hidden

592 from sight behind a pillar, holding his hand be-
602 fore his mouth lest his breath should reach the hearer. [69] With younger mother's brothers more intimately responsible for his education, a youth's etiquette is necessarily relaxed, but he observes the greatest possible formal respect before them. A similar etiquette is preserved before older brothers and classificatory brothers: after puberty these never joke, sit or chew betal and areca nuts together. A junior man never sits before his senior except at mealtimes when all men may sit in the dining hall in order of age, served by women of the group who eat later in company in the kitchen. In general, age overrides generation and also segment in the formal structuring of relationships between men of a property-group: mother's mother's brother is accorded the same etiquette as mother's brother, and classificatory older brother as older brother. Emotionally, however, there tends to be less acrimony and more tenderness, as might be expected, between alternate than between proximal generations; there is also a strong tendency for own siblings to support each other against classificatory sib-
613 lings. This is part of the process of clear-cut
593 segmentation in the lineage along lines descending through sisters: it culminates regularly in quarrels between classificatory brothers and division of property between the segments. This process of segmentation throughout the whole lineage derives from the paramount strength of the mother-child bond, the key-pin of the kinship system. For both men and women,

613 no other personal relationship can override this:
593 both sexes have their permanent home with the mother throughout her life and accord her unfailing [70] reverence and affection. From this bond issues the unity of the sibling group, (9) particularly the strong tie between brother and sister which emotionally reflects the dependence of men on their mothers. With the elder sister as with the mother a man has an intimate relationship of reverence mingled with easy familiarity: the two may sit together and discuss affairs of their kin-group, and the sister early accords her brother the right to discipline her children. With her elder brother, as with her maternal uncle, after her puberty, a woman must maintain a formal etiquette of partial avoidance: she may not sit before him speak to him unasked, or be alone in a room or a house with him. Only if she gravely offends against traditional morality, he may traditionally beat her even after puberty, for a Nayar woman owes the same obedience to all older matrilineal kinsmen as a collectivity as does a woman of the patrilineal castes to her father and later her
[684] husband. Incest with the younger sister or classificatory sister or sister's daughter is a most heinous crime, formerly punishable by death, and in modern times by total ostracism by the caste and lineage. It does however occasionally take place and is evidently recognized as a temptation under matrilocal residence, hence the formal etiquette imposed to counter it.

592 In a traditional taravad, therefore, women form the core of the group: men stand on the

592 periphrey, though the legal power is in their hands. They are bound to it by their interpersonal ties with their mothers and sisters, [71] hence the formal etiquette imposed to counter it.

In a traditional taravad, therefore, women form the core of the group: men stand on the periphery, though the legal power is in their hands. They are bound to it by their interpersonal ties with their mothers and sisters, but to some extent drawn away from it by their mutual rivalries and by their sexual liaisons with women in other lineages. The bonds between a woman and her daughters, as between sisters, are much more intense and less rivalrous than are those between men of the group. Residential separation, between a woman and her daughters, even for visits of more than a day or two, is traditionally unthinkable, and sisters even today often stay together until torn apart by the rivalries of their respective children. Cooking is communal in a taravad: the mother or oldest woman arranges the division of female labour. Apart from clothing (freely borrowed between women), property, even jewelry, is communally owned. Though a general respect is owed to all older women, the etiquette of behavior between them is easy and informal. In the house, the small group of one woman and her children receives little spatial recognition. In the daytime, all work and play together in the kitchen, upstairs rooms and back verandah; at night, older children sleep with their grandmothers in the main hall, while young ones go

592 with their parents into any convenient vacant
[582] room. At the same time, the separate, unique role of each woman as potential founder of a new taravad is recognized in certain rules: both sororate and sororal polygymy are traditionally forbidden, for example, since the inter-personal unity between sisters, as well as their separate positions each at the head of a line of matrilineal descendants, must not be endangered or distorted by their extra-lineage ties.

592 [72] (2) The Traditional Institution of Marriage.
581 Consistent with the unity and multiplex economic, legal and ceremonial functions of the taravad as a corporate group, marriage was traditionally the slenderest of ties, while as a
592 social concept fatherhood scarcely existed. We
582 have mentioned already that at the tali-rite of
608 retainer, middle class and servant Nayars and of temple servants, the immature girls of a lineage were collectively "married" and divorced before puberty by their local caste group as a whole, represented by their individual enangar. In desavari, chiefly and royal lineages the tali was usually tied by a man of a higher sub-caste from which the lineage was wont to draw lovers for its women in hypergamous liaisons. The women of desavari lineages were thus usually "married" by naduvari men, naduvari and royal women either by Nambudiri men or by men of some higher-ranking royal lineage more ancient than their own. In all castes, the tali-tier had no subsequent responsibilities and if he wished need never visit the woman again.

572 His relationship was however remembered, and
582 he was regarded as the ritual father (appan) of
608 the woman's children, in contrast to their genitor or to the step-father who happened currently to be visiting a woman, these latter both being
608 called acchan. Ritual fatherhood meant nothing
764 at all except that at the death of the tali-tier,
602 the woman and all her children must observe death pollution. Death pollution was otherwise observed only for matrilineal kin; it was not until recently observed for the genitor or other lovers of the mother. Its observance for the tali-tier shows that even the Nayars, with their extreme emphasis on the matrilineal line and total exclusion of the husband and father from economic, legal or ceremonial rights, recognized the field of kinship to extend beyond the unilineal descent-group, and felt the need to give ceremonial recognition [73] to the concepts of marriage and of paternity, even though they gave none to the individual husband and father.

595 After the tali-rite and shortly before or after
833 puberty, a girl might enter into a number of unions with men of her own subcaste (including, if both wished, the ritual husband of the tali-rite) or of an appropriate higher subcaste. Similarly, a man might cohabit with any number of mistresses from his own or an appropriate lower subcaste. A man usually visited a mistress after supper, and left before breakfast; even today in orthodox matrilocal households men eat with their sisters and mothers and visit or accept food in the conjugal house in the daytime only on special invitation from the wife's karanavan.

outside on the verandah before he comes to visit her.

These statements however again require some modification in the case of hypergamous unions. In recent years at all events, a powerful Nambudiri or royal landowner might occasionally force his attentions on a Nayar woman, whose family would be unlikely to oppose him. In two cases I even heard of Nambudiris who had succeeded in carrying on a liaison with a dead Nayar wife's younger sister, though this is contrary to Nayar rules of mating and led to unhappiness and strong covert [77] disapproval among the woman's kinsmen. In general, however, the traditional picture of Nayar marriage is one in which women voluntarily seek the favours of men: rape, for example, is a crime apparently unheard of among them. Certainly, cases are recorded of the dismissal of a higher caste man by a Nayar woman.

Combined polyandrous and polygynous mating had a function in maintaining the unity of the lineage. It seems that in every matrilineal system one basic conflict is inherent, namely the conflict between a man's ties to his natal kin on the one hand and to his kin by marriage and procreation on the other. In the Nayar system in this area, the conflict was resolved by almost completely eliminating the claims of the father and his kin. Polyandry and polygyny, combined, minimized the rights of the husband and father, and dispersed their roles between a number of men. This preserved the unity of the lineage, by preventing the close attachment of men to

613 their children in other lineages. The separa-
592 tion of the ritual marriage (the tali-rite) from
595 actual cohabitation (sambandham, initiated without religious rites) underlined the necessity to the lineage of marriage and procreation, and the exclusion of the individual husband and father from a legally and socially significant role in relation to it.

594 It is clear therefore that whatever name we
592 give to the traditional marital relationship
566 among Nayars, the elementary family, contrary to the view of Murdock (11), did not exist as an economic, legal or ceremonial unit among them. This circumstance, which is perhaps unique in the world, was evidently made possible by their specialized role as one caste group in a larger society in which, in general, marriage and the elementary family were institutionalized. First, the Nayar system could probably not have come about in any but a leisure class supported by the labour of tenants and serfs. Because of this, young Nayar men need give economic [78] support neither to their wives nor to their sisters. Women were the people who sat at home on the land; their maintenance was assured by the payment of rents from low caste tenants and the labour of serfs, and it was necessary to have only one old man living with them to manage
701 their financial affairs. The feudal relationships
595 of the caste system thus freed all able-bodied men for their occupation as a mobile militia. In explaining their peculiar marriage relationships, I am inclined to emphasize the military organization even more than the status of Nayars

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Central Kerala Nayar

563 [162] The Christians of Kerala numbered about 20 per cent of the population in 1931. The Syrian Christians, the most ancient and numerous group, may be descended from Persian Nestorians; they were trading on the coast at least by 525 A.D. (McCrindle, 1897: 119). Christians were and are concentrated in Travancore and Cochin. They received [651] land grants near the ports and enjoyed virtual self-government provided they paid taxes to the kings (Logan, 1951, I: 260–270; III: cxxi–cxxvi). As landlords, tenants, and administrators—as well as traders—they ranked socially parallel to the Nayars and were served in the same manner by Hindu polluting castes and serfs. Their trade declined after the Arabs became dominant on the coast, and some of them began to serve in the royal armies along with Nayars. The Portuguese converted some Syrians to Roman Catholicism, but the converts still retained the Syriac rite. All Syrians were readily distinguishable from the lower-ranking Latin Catholics, converts to Catholicism from Portuguese times who were drawn from various polluting castes.

The Economic System

438 The principles of reciprocity and redistribution,[4] rather than of market trade, dominated the village economy until toward the mid-nineteenth [564] century. In villages, castes were characterized by hereditary occupations and correspondingly by hereditary, differential rights in the [463] produce of village lands (Logan, 1951, I: 110–112, 269, 270, 599–600, 623). The village landlord and the Nayar tenants were the main redistributive agents, collecting in goods from the lower orders and [592] redistributing them in customary shares. In all village economic transactions, *households*, and not whole caste groups or individuals, were the units of interaction.

471 592 566 The village landlord's household "owned" almost all the land in the village. "Ownership" meant both more and less than modern Western landownership (Logan, 1951, I: 602–603). The landlord might not sell his land without the consent of the king or of a chief, and sale was restricted to families of appropriate caste. He might not evict his tenants, village servants, or serfs without their consent unless they committed grave crime (*ibid.*, I: 607). On the other hand, the landlord's ownership included judicial rights over the village population.

The landlord retained a portion of the land as his private domain for cultivation by his serfs. The rest was held by Nayar retainer households as non-cultivating tenants (*kānakkar*). The tenant's household

[4] For an analysis of the general operation of these principles in the Indian village economy, see Neale, 1957: 218–236.

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originally rendered a portion of the produce to the landlord and additionally paid tribute in kind at New Year and at the succession of a new landlord or a new tenant on the death of the old (*ibid.*, I: 605–614). In return for their hereditary land rights tenants owed military and personal services to the landlord or to his military representative.

Each Nayar tenant household, like the landlord, retained a portion of land for cultivation by its serfs. Serfs were attached to the plots on which they lived, took the house name of their masters and were held as ancestral property. The master supplied the serf with daily rice, building materials, a house site, and special gifts at life crises and festivals.

Each tenant household also gave some lands to cultivating subtenant households (*verumpāttamdar*) of the Tiyyar caste. According to Logan, the latter traditionally retained one-third of the net produce and surrendered the rest to their masters (*ibid.*, I: 583).

The Nayar servant castes and most of the polluting castes of village servants (astrologers, artisans, bow makers, basket makers, etc.) owed their main services to the landlord, the Nayar tenants, or both. Each family held the hereditary service right of a village or occasionally of a small group of adjacent villages. Village servants gave their services to the appropriate higher-caste households when required. In return they received from each patron household customary biennial shares of rice and other goods after the two harvests of the year. Each servant family held a house site and garden from the landlord by hereditary right and was provided by its various patrons with the materials (metal, wood, etc.) of its craft.

Among the higher polluting castes, most of the village servants (astrologers, artisans, washermen, barbers, etc.) simply exchanged services reciprocally without making gifts of grain. Within this range of castes, however, Tiyyars, as cultivators, were subsidiary agents of redistribution, for they received the services of almost all the village servant castes and made biennial gifts to them of grain.

The village was thus almost self-sufficient for food and the daily necessities of life. In addition, part of its produce in rice and coconuts went out in the form of annual tribute given by the landlord to his district chief. The chief in turn gave tribute to the king and in addition rendered succession fees and gifts at life-crisis rites (Logan, 1951, II: ccxviii–ccxix; Ayyar, 1938: 270).

A large part of the king's revenue, however, came from taxes on overseas trade. Before 1500 the trade was in the hands of Arab merchants, who obtained pepper and other spices from inland land-

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exponents. Marriages at all levels between the religious and secular hierarchies pointed up this interdependence.

Among the Nayars hypergamy must also have cemented lord-vassal relationships. Older Nayars still take pride in the fact that their lineages have for centuries been fathered by chiefs, royals, and Brahmans. Traditionally, it was for the sake of this generalized filial bond that they were prepared to die in battle and, paradoxically, to deny themselves paternal rights in their own children.

Matrilineal Units of the Nayar Retainer Castes

THE CLAN

The clan was the largest matrilineal unit to which a Nayar commoner belonged. Its members believed themselves descended from a common ancestress, but her name was not normally remembered and the exact genealogical relationships between a clan's subordinate segments were often unknown. Occasionally, all of a clan's known members lived within a single Nayar neighborhood (*tara*). In this case the clan was co-terminous with the next lower order of matrilineal unit, which I call the lineage. More commonly, the clan had a nucleus of members within the neighborhood from which it originally sprang, together with outlying segments whose forebears had moved to other neighborhoods of the chiefdom. Clan affiliations among Nayar retainers do not seem to have extended beyond the chiefdom.

The clan was called a *taravād*, the word also used for the lineage and the matrilineal household unit. "Taravād" is derived from "tara," meaning "mound,"[6] in this case the raised foundation on which a Nayar house was built. Its members derived a sense of unity from the belief that their matrilineal forebears sprang from the same ancestral house, and if the site of this house still existed they retained a sentimental attachment to it. The word "taravād" (befitting for a settled agricultural people) was in fact equivalent to the English "house" in its sense both of ancestry and of place. The clan was usually called by the name of its original ancestral house site.

The clan was exogamous and sex relations within it were forbidden. Those of its members who lived near and met often used kinship terms to address each other. If a death or birth occurred, clan members had to be informed by messenger. Upon receipt of the informa-

[6] Any kind of raised foundation of earth or laterite is called a tara. Tara (meaning "neighborhood") is derived from the large platform of earth round a sacred "milk"-exuding tree (*alstonia scholaris*) located near the Nayar neighborhood temple of Bhagavadi. The neighborhood assembly congregated on this mound.

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Nayar retainers resided. A neighborhood normally contained some six to ten lineages and probably had a population of about three hundred Nayars. 613

The lineage was called a *taravād*. If it occupied the ancestral village of the clan its members used the ancestral house name as both clan and lineage names. If it lived elsewhere its members added a distinctive name, derived from their new locale, to the clan name. Each segment of a lineage occupying one house in turn had its own house name, and each Nayar had a personal name followed by the caste title. A typical Nayar name might therefore be "Thengiparambil Padikkil Kirakkutt-Velappil Govindan Nayar"—"Clan of the coconut garden, lineage of the gatehouse, household of the eastern garden, Govindan (personal name) Nayar." Usually one branch of a lineage continued to occupy and to rebuild the oldest ancestral home of the clan. The clan, lineage, and house names of these members would then be collapsed into one.

A lineage normally comprised some four to eight households, each a matrilineal segment of three to six generations' depth, including the youngest children and the common ancestress. Sometimes the households of a lineage might occupy adjacent gardens on a continuous stretch of dry land in the high-caste residential area of one village. Alternatively the houses of a lineage might become scattered throughout the high-caste residential areas of the several villages of the neighborhood. For it was possible for Nayar tenants, with the consent of the various overlords concerned, to buy or exchange the tenures of gardens. Further, a branch of a lineage which was expanding might be allotted the tenure of a newly developed garden at some distance from its former abode. Normally, however, the gardens in which their houses were built remained in the possession of one or other branch of a lineage over many generations. 613 592

Some writers would not apply the word lineage to the group which I am discussing. It was not always a lineage in the sense of a matrilineal group tracing descent from a common ancestress through a determinate number of generations (cf. *Notes and Queries in Anthropology*, 1952: 88–89). This definition applied to lineages which had occupied a neighborhood only for six or seven generations. It might also apply to an older lineage some of whose branches had died out, or to an older lineage whose membership had not happened to expand greatly over several generations. Often, however, there would be very old lineages whose most distantly related segments no longer remembered their exact genealogical relationship and whose members 613

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were no longer sure of the name of their founding ancestress. The reason for this was that over time, a lineage was formed from the successive divisions of matrilineal households springing from an original matrilineal household. As will be seen later, a matrilineal group occupying one house and jointly owning property divided into its component major segments to form two or more new households at a definite point in its development. Each woman was potentially the ancestress of a distinct segment. However, her segment would in fact become distinct only if she had two or more daughters who themselves lived to bear daughters. If she had only one daughter this woman replaced her in the lineage structure as the ancestress of her segment, and after three or four generations the existence of one or other of these women would be forgotten.

However, although exact genealogical relationships tended to be forgotten after some five to seven generations, the order of segmentation within a lineage was remembered because it was relevant to the reversion of property. If a household died out, its property was divided between those segments of the same order as itself which had sprung from the next larger segment. It is for this reason that I call the clan members of one neighborhood a lineage, for their order of segmentation *was* known and was relevant in this limited context. As far as I am aware, those branches of a clan which left their ancestral neighborhood lost their right to claim property in the village of their origin.

In other ways the order of segmentation was unimportant for the structuring of intra-lineage relationships. It is true that minimal segments of a minor segment which had jointly held property a generation previously, maintained a closer sense of kinship than did more distantly related segments. But segments intermediate between the household and the lineage had no special property, activities, or ceremonies, and their members never met to the exclusion of other lineage kin. Neither were whole intermediate segments mobilized in quarrels between individuals of a lineage. Quarrels were restricted to the households of the disputants and were normally settled through appeal to a popular, unrelated arbitrator. If they became serious they were forcibly settled by the intervention of the neighborhood assembly and of the village headman.

As a part of the clan, the lineage was exogamous, sex relations were prohibited within it, and ritual pollution was observed by its members at a birth or death. Outside the lineage and within the clan it is doubtful whether these rules could be enforced by law. Within

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613 small neighborhoods, indeed, all the lineages were sometimes enangar
476 to one another, although this seems to have been rare. At least one man and one woman of each of its enangar lineage had to visit a household for the life-crisis rites of its members, at which they gave [553] ceremonial assistance and partook of a feast. These rites included the [588] naming ceremony of a baby, the first rice feeding in the sixth month, [881] the pre-puberty marriage rite of girls, the first menstruation ceremony of a girl, the first pregnancy ceremony of a woman, the offerings to [843] a departed spirit which closed the period of death pollution, and the [769] subsequent offerings each year to the spirits of recently dead members of a property group on the anniversaries of their deaths. Enangar [765] also gave neighborly help on the day of a cremation and, during the [783] fifteen days of death pollution, provided cooked food for the household of the bereaved.

613 Although whole lineages were linked as enangar to each other, a
592 linked lineage acted as a collectivity only at the pre-puberty marriage rite, at cremations, and on the sixteenth day after a death. For the other life crises, each household of a lineage would invite as enangar partners only one household in each of their linked lineages with whom they had special customary ties. Similarly, the members of a household were not obliged to invite other branches of their own lineage to the minor life crises, although they might do so if they wished.

613 The enangar played their most important role at the pre-puberty
598 marriage rite. Every ten to twelve years each lineage held a grand ceremony in its oldest ancestral house, at which time all immature girls of the lineage of one generation were ritually married by men of enangar groups. This ceremony, called *tālikettukalyānam* ("*tāli*-tying ceremony") had to be performed for each girl before puberty on pain of her excommunication from caste (Gough, 1955). Before it took place, elders of the assembly selected suitable youths of the enangar lineages as ritual bridegrooms for the girls. At the ceremony each bridegroom, in the company of representatives of every household in the neighborhood, tied a gold ornament (tāli) round the neck of his bride. Each couple was then secluded in a room of the ancestral house for three days and nights, during which, if the girl was old enough, sexual relations might take place. On the fourth day the bridegrooms departed. They had no further obligations to their brides [885] and did not need to visit them again unless they wished. After the tāli rite, however, a girl was regarded as having attained the status of a mature woman, ready to bear children to perpetuate her lineage.

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613 182 birth pollutions were not extended to them by their host lineage. Instead, as we have seen, they continued to observe these rites for several generations along with their clansfolk elsewhere.

The information on this procedure is incomplete because it does not take place in modern times. It is not known whether a lineage segment ever became incorporated into a new retainer caste as well as a new neighborhood, although this seems unlikely. It is not known whether an indigenous lineage which shrank to the size of one small property group ever allied itself in putative matrilineal kinship with another established lineage. It is also uncertain whether major segments of a very large lineage might over time break the pollution bond and gradually cease to observe exogamy. Some evidence from a Cochin village suggests that this may have happened. Shortly before my stay a man and woman of two lineages which had the same enangar and had never been known to marry, entered into a traditional type of informal marriage relationship. Elders of the village then began to wonder whether the lineages had not once formed one lineage, either by true matrilineal kinship or by joint performance of the tāli rite. As they were unable to foist their doubts on to the junior generation the marriage persisted. Thus, what may once have been an ancient tie of lineage and clan exogamy was quietly broken. I do not know whether fission within a lineage was traditionally possible or whether it occurs only in modern times, when the neighborhood assembly and the lineage itself are both disintegrating.

THE PROPERTY GROUP

613 592 *Structure* The property group among Nayar retainers was a segment of the lineage having a time depth of some three to six generations, including the youngest members and the common ancestress. It therefore typically comprised a group of brothers and sisters (real or classificatory), together with the children and daughters' children of the sisters. This group was the joint-property-owning unit. Its members were from birth equal co-parceners in the buildings, land, movables, serfs, and all other property which had come to them from their matrilineal forebears, or had been conferred on them by their feudal lord, or had been acquired by the efforts of individual members. The group's oldest male member (kāranavan) was its legal guardian and represented it in the caste assembly.

When spoken of in its own right the property group, like the lineage, was called a taravād. When spoken of as a segment of the lineage it was called a *tāvari* (literally, "mother's line"). Tāvari could also be used of any intermediate segment of the lineage or of a mini-

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mal segment of one mother and her children within the property group. Each property group usually had a separate garden name in addition to its lineage name.

Residence Among retainer Nayars of this area a property group usually owned only one homestead and was simultaneously a dwelling group. Occasionally among retainers, however, and more commonly among chiefs and village headmen, a property group which increased in size might build two or more homesteads on its lands. If the houses were adjacent they were usually occupied indiscriminately by members and cooking was done only in one. If the homesteads were some distance apart each might be occupied by a minimal segment of the group. The kāranavan would manage the resources of the whole group but would allocate provisions separately to each household. Separate cooking would be carried on.

Spouses lived separately in their natal units, with the husband visiting the wife. We shall call this type of residence *duolocal*.

A traditional homestead of retainer or village headman's rank centered about a large main building with two stories, separate staircases for men and women, and, in the middle of the building, a small courtyard open to the sky. The house faced east, and was fronted by a spacious veranda, used normally by men of the group and their male visitors. Within, a passage led to the central courtyard, round which rooms opened off on three sides. They included an ancestor shrine; several storerooms containing clothing in boxes, metal vessels, jewelry, weapons, and paddy (unhusked rice) in large wooden chests; one or more rooms for everyday use, each with sleeping mats, a bench, wooden stools and chests, and a rope to hang clothes; and a small room occupied by women during their delivery and menstrual seclusions. A roofed cloister with pillars ran between the open courtyard and the rooms. Beyond the courtyard to the west was a long, narrow dining hall with a large kitchen behind it. Behind this lay the back veranda, normally used only by women and children. Upstairs might be four or five bedrooms in which women received their husbands. Men born into the group seldom entered these upstairs rooms and were forbidden to use the women's staircase.

Outside the house in the outer courtyard a separate building served as a granary for paddy. The upstairs of this building was often set aside for the kāranavan's use. Here he slept, was served with food by women of the house, entertained co-villagers, and kept records of the group's economic transactions. If the group was large a second separate building was often reserved to junior men for reading, en-

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342 tertaining friends, or sleeping when they were not visiting their wives.
[343] A cowshed a few yards from the residential buildings completed the arrangements in a normal retainer homestead. In village headmen's
342 and chiefly households whose women often had Brahman husbands
556 a separate building with its own kitchen was set aside to entertain the men when they visited their wives.

[351] The buildings and outer courtyard were surrounded by a shady garden of coconut, jack, cashew, and mango trees. Chiefs and village
[312] headmen had a private bathing pool with stone steps round it in their own gardens. Retainers more often bathed in the large public bathing
[515] pools attached to the temples and reserved for "clean" castes of the village. Men and women bathed and swam daily on opposite sides of the pool.

351 In the southwest corner of the garden an open space was set aside
613 as the property group's cremation ground, entered only at funerals.
[764] In another corner was a dense shrubbery devoted to the snake gods
[776] of the group. Offerings were made there to small stone images of
[782] cobras, and if real cobras appeared they were regarded as manifesta-
[825] tions of these deities.

A high bamboo fence surrounded the whole establishment. It was entered through a wooden gatehouse within which armed men might
592 sit on guard in time of war.

241 *Economic Activities* The property group obtained almost all of its subsistence from garden and paddy lands held on tenure from the
427 village landlord and cultivated by Tiyyar sub-tenants or by Pulaya
613 serfs. The property group surrendered part of its produce in kind as
433 dues to the landlord. It retained part for maintenance, stored part for repayment to its serfs as daily subsistence, and gave portions twice annually to the village servant households. Tiyyar tenants retained enough for their own needs, but gave the bulk of their produce to their Nayar masters. Increasingly during the period of European trade
[439] the property group also sold spices and coconuts to Muslim middle-
[432] men in exchange for cash or cloth. The cash was used to buy brass and silver vessels, gold ornaments and jewelry, and other luxury goods
[431] from the towns. The property group gave some cloth to its serfs and tenants at festivals once a year.

613 The kāranavan managed all these transactions and controlled the
592 group's estate. He might allocate specific tasks of management to
[465] juniors, but no payment was made on behalf of the group, no crops were sold, and no goods were consumed without his consent. Junior men serving in the king's wars received small daily cash sums on an

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individual basis, but this money seems only to have sufficed for their food and other necessities while on the march or on service in towns. When they were at home in their villages their kāranavan assumed responsibility for each man's customary gifts to his wives in other households.

Within his own household the kāranavan personally allocated their subsistence to its members. Every few weeks he transferred quantities of unhusked rice, vegetables, and other stores from the granary to storerooms inside the house. They were then usually taken over by the eldest woman, who kept keys to the storerooms and chests and allocated daily supplies to the kitchen. In property groups with more than one homestead the kāranavan delivered quantities of paddy, salt, and coconut oil twice annually to each house according to the number of its members. Each house sent a person daily to the ancestral house to bring fresh vegetables, milk, buttermilk, and other perishable foods. In all taravāds the kāranavan controlled purchases from the town. Twice a year—at New Year and at the harvest festival—he distributed clothing to both male and female members.

Virtuous kāranavans were those who managed the daily affairs of the taravād with thrift, justice, and meticulous care, but who, through judicious planning, were able to lavish grand feasts upon caste members, tenants, village servants, and serfs at the major life-crisis rites. An aged kāranavan would enumerate with satisfaction the various feasts at funerals, tāli rites, and first-menstruation ceremonies which he had satisfactorily conducted. Each of the servant castes contributed appropriate goods or services in advance of these feasts, and each Nayar house reciprocated the hospitality when its own life-crisis rites came round. Besides reaffirming in a ceremonial manner the different types of ties between Nayars and between Nayars and the lower castes, the life-crisis ceremonies seem to have stimulated production and provided suitable foci for acts of economic redistribution and reciprocity.

The amounts of time spent by junior men of the taravād on different activities are no longer clearly known. We know however that at the age of seven a boy was inducted into military training in the village gymnasium; this training persists in a few villages, and includes fencing, wrestling, rigorous exercise, and very strenuous massage. Traditionally, Nayars also learned archery from a special caste of village servants (Vil Kurups). For a part of their time they attended a village school run by yet another caste of schoolteachers (Eruttacchans); almost all adult Nayar men and most women were literate

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in her care particular daily tasks in connection with cooking, housework, the pounding of paddy, and the tending of small children. The minimal unit of one woman and her own children, although having a special solidarity emotionally, was given very little recognition in the division of work. Women cooked communally in the kitchen, bathed and washed their own and any children's clothes in company in the bathing pool, and at the harvests moved in household groups to the fields to help the serf women of their families in cutting paddy. Nayar women's agricultural work, however, was subsidiary and they took no part in the more arduous tasks of transplanting and weeding.

The women of a Nayar retainer lineage also owed services to women of the landlord household to which their lineage was attached. Although their lower-caste rank prevented them from touching their mistress or entering her kitchen, they swept the house, accompanied its womenfolk to their bathing pool, and did various household chores. The landlord household normally chose three or four favorites from among the lineages attached to them to perform these services, but women of any retainer household might be summoned during the special preparations for a feast.

Authority and Responsibility Property groups, rather than lineages, were the main legal units within the local caste group. Their kāranavans formed the neighborhood assembly. Within the assembly, a kāranavan acted on behalf of his property group in managing the Nayar temple, settling small civil disputes in his own and lower castes, and adjudicating in cases of offense against Nayar religious law.

A kāranavan also represented his property group in its relations with its feudal lord and with higher authorities of the kingdom. We have seen that the property group and not the lineage held land on tenure from its landlord, and that although a lineage was attached to a landlord by hereditary right, the landlord conducted all economic transactions separately with the head of each property group within it. Similarly, each kāranavan was required to represent his own property group in ceremonial attendance on his village landlord, the chief of his district, or (if he were a direct vassal of the royal lineage) his king, at religious festivals associated with the temples of these dignitaries.

On behalf of his property group, a kāranavan was held legally responsible for his juniors in most types of legal offense. He paid their fines from taravād funds if they were found guilty of petty theft or debt before the village headman or the chief. If a member of the taravād was convicted in the royal court of treason, his kāranavan and

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613 592 681 [687] [703] his whole property group might be put to death. Conversely, the property group as a whole was rewarded for extraordinary military valor on the part of one of its members. In a period of conquest of a new district, the king sometimes removed from office recalcitrant village headmen or even chiefs of the enemy side and replaced them with property groups from among his own following. Again, when a soldier died fighting with exceptional bravery, his chief sometimes rewarded his property group with a plot of land held on a special military tenure, under unusually favorable terms.

As we have seen, the property group had the prime responsibility for an individual convicted by the neighborhood assembly of offense against the religious laws of caste.

613 592 681 692 The kāranavan's day-to-day authority over his juniors was conferred upon him by his feudal lord, backed by the judicial authority of the king. He had the right to command and discipline all junior members. In cases of extreme disobedience he might inflict corporal punishment on the women or children, or cause a junior man of the taravād to do this. He seems to have had the right temporarily to expel from the household and to deny maintenance to junior men who insulted or disobeyed him. As manager of the estate he also had disciplinary rights over the taravād's tenants. In serious matters the tenants had recourse to the village headman, perhaps to the chief, but their own master settled minor disputes among them and fined them for small offenses. In law a kāranavan appears to have had complete rights of life and death over his property group's serfs. A very few cases are recorded of his exercising it to the full. More common are the stories of extraordinary loyalty between serf and master, especially of serfs who died fighting to defend their lords' homes. Their spirits were rewarded with a place in the taravād's ancestral shrine.

613 592 681 692 703 It is clear that whatever his *de jure* authority, the kāranavan's *de facto* authority was greater over women and children than over junior men, who were often absent on military service. It seems probable that at these times soldiers came under the direct legal control of officers of the kingdom and that in at least some contexts their property groups were not held responsible for them. We know for example that if a Nayar soldier murdered another he was tried in the court of the king or of a feudatory prince and, if convicted, was executed promptly by four or five of his peers, presumably without his property group being consulted or punished. Thieves caught within the boundaries of coastal towns seem to have been similarly dealt with (Barbosa, 1518, quoted in Ayyar, 1938: 284–286). It may be that their

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property groups were held legally responsible for Nayar men only when they committed high treason or when they became engaged in disputes and offenses within the neighborhood of their birth.

It seems probable that the kāranavan's powers over his juniors and over their property were limited by the codification of law which came about during British rule (Aiyar, 1922: 33–132). It is not clear whether he could traditionally alienate land without the consent of other adults of the taravād; during British rule he could not. British law also permitted appeal to the court by junior members for the removal of a kāranavan who could be shown guilty of gross mismanagement. He could then be set aside in favor of his immediate junior. An inefficient kāranavan could moreover be forced by the court to maintain accounts of his income and expenditure. Since 1933 in Malabar District and 1938 in Cochin, all kāranavans have been legally obliged to do this and to make available their accounts for inspection by junior members once a year, as provided in the Madras Marumakkattayam (Matriliny) Act, 1933, and the Cochin Nayar Act, 1938. However, few juniors avail themselves of this right, which is evidently repugnant to the traditional ideals of obedience and trust toward elders of the taravād.

Even traditionally, however, both junior men and women were often consulted in the management of the group's affairs. If a dispute arose between minimal segments of the taravād it was common for appeal to be made to an arbitrator of the caste from outside the lineage. The settlement agreed upon would be embodied in a document called a *kārār*, which legally bound all adult members. In large taravāds the allocation of separate houses and sometimes even of separate land to each segment was usually embodied in a kārār. All land continued to be managed by the kāranavan, but he paid a sum of paddy each year to the senior woman of each household from the land allotted to her segment.

Kārārs were, however, common only in village headmen's, chiefly, and royal property groups. Too little property was usually involved in the case of retainer Nayars, among whom effective daily management was divided between the kāranavan and the oldest woman. As we have seen, the former carried out all formal transactions outside the group, controlled the estate *in toto*, and disciplined men and boys. The latter organized feminine tasks and held more informal authority over women and small children. When the kāranavan was the son or younger brother of the eldest woman, management usually ran particularly smoothly. The oldest woman might indeed be *de facto* head

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of the group, maintaining its accounts in her own hands and counseling the kāranavan on his transactions with outsiders. When the oldest woman was the kāranavan's own or classificatory younger sister or sister's daughter her role was unequivocally subordinate and a formal division of duties was common.

Rites of the Property Group The property group jointly invited enangar households to the ceremonies of name giving, first rice feeding, first menstruation, and death. The lineage as a whole held the tāli rite in its oldest house. However, expenses were divided between the property groups and food was cooked separately in their homes. Similarly, at a death the whole lineage observed pollution and attended the cremation, the gathering of bones on the seventh day, and the purification and feasting on the fifteenth and sixteenth days. But men and women of the deceased's own property group offered cooked rice to the spirit in their courtyard each day during the pollution period. The rites of chief mourner were performed by the junior man considered most closely related to the deceased—her eldest son in the case of a woman, and the man immediately junior to him in the property group in the case of a man.

The propitiation of cobra gods and of dead matrilineal forebears also united the group's members. The cobra deities (*nāgas*) could inflict or avert sickness in general but were especially believed responsible for the fertility or barrenness[1] of taravād women. If a woman failed to conceive, a performance was held at which men and women of a wandering caste called Pulluvar played instruments and sang songs to entice the cobras to appear. A group of women of the taravād, who had purified themselves by sex continence and fasting for several days, then became possessed by the snake gods. They performed a wild dance, bowing and swaying in a circle and sweeping their hair along the ground. In this condition they might speak with the voices of the gods and announce whatever propitiations were necessary to appease them. Sometimes one or more of the women fell into a trance.

It seems reasonable to suppose that the snake gods were worshipped as phallic symbols. They were definitely not regarded as the spirits of dead matrilineal forebears, yet were capable of withholding fertility or of causing women to conceive. Perhaps, therefore, they symbolized the procreative powers of past genitors of the property group, who

[1] Snake gods inflicted barrenness; the lineage goddess inflicted miscarriages and sickness in childbirth.

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had been so essential to its perpetuation, yet so firmly excluded from its everyday affairs.

Within each Nayar house one room was devoted to the spirits of dead kāranavans. It contained a number of small wooden stools on which spirits were believed to come and sit. The ancestor shrine of the lineage's oldest house contained many stools placed there in turn for the kāranavans of past generations, reaching back to the foundation of the lineage. A newer house would contain only the stools of kāranavans of that house. Offerings of cooked food were made before each stool by the living kāranavan, in the presence of all members, twice a year. The kāranavans' spirits were vindictive rather than protective. They were prone to punish the taravād with sickness or financial loss if any of its members failed in details of ritual performance, in care of the property, or in piety toward matrilineal kin. I have suggested elsewhere (Gough, 1958) that the cult of dead matrilineal forebears served as a focus for aggressive impulses which had their origin in relationships with living matrilineal elders. At the same time it united the living in fear and reverence of the dead and reaffirmed the moral laws of the taravād. It also acted as a sanction against a kāranavan's own exploitation of his juniors, since the maintenance of right relations with junior kinsmen formed part of his pious duty to his forebears.

The Splitting of Property Groups Genealogies and property documents reveal that during the nineteenth century the property groups of retainer Nayars divided at a particular point in their development. This occurred when the property group comprised two or more discrete segments descended from sisters, each segment containing an adult male capable of becoming kāranavan of his branch. For a segment to be "discrete," its founding ancestress, whether herself living or dead, must not have a mother, brothers, or mother's brothers alive. Separation before this point was not possibly because the division of property was stirpital. Individual men, the managers of property, could not separate themselves from their own mothers or sisters. A man could therefore never be a member of a different property group from that of his own mother's mother's brother, mother's brother, or brother. Division could take place only between groups headed by men from different minimal segments (parallel cousins, a man and his classificatory mother's brother, etc.), who were no longer held together by submission to a common mother's brother, grandmother, or great-uncle.

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613 592 174 It seems probable that the property groups of retainer Nayars divided somewhat earlier in their development during the nineteenth century than during the period of native rule. The reason for this is that during British rule Nayar men, having no other compulsory work, considered themselves old enough to become kāranavans by the age of thirty to forty, provided their appropriate elders were dead. In the traditional period, presumably, a man would be in arms until at least the age of fifty and would be unlikely to press for kāranavanship before that age.

613 592 161 174 [195] Further differences in the patterns of division of property groups must have arisen from the marked increase in population during British rule. This is not documented until after the 1870's but from genealogies it appears to have begun between four and five generations ago. The increase would mean that more women, and a higher proportion of women, would have had enough living children to become the founders of discrete lineage segments during their lives or shortly after their deaths. Thus property groups in the nineteenth century would divide not only at an earlier point in their structural development but also more frequently than was the case during native rule.

613 592 174 423 The absolute size of traditional property groups was limited by the amount of land available to each. It can be roughly gauged by the size of the houses they left behind. It seems unlikely that a traditional retainer property group would contain more than twenty-five to thirty people, or fewer than six.

Interpersonal Kinship Relationships

121 I describe the relationships between kinsfolk as these have existed in the recent past in the most "traditional" households, making reference to earlier periods when this is possible.

WOMAN-SON

593 The relationship of mother and son was the strongest in the system in the sense of mutual obligation and the expectation of mutual love. A man should place the needs of his mother above those of all other [858] kin. A woman should show equal concern for her children of both sexes, but it was expected that her primary attachment would be to her sons.

[853] [863] [867] A woman's obligations to both daughters and sons in their early childhood included breast feeding to the age of two or three, care, especially in sickness, and instruction in cleanliness and in the manners and morals of their caste.

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group supported each other firmly in disputes with other property groups of the lineage, while the men of a lineage were expected to defend each other to the death in outbreaks of violence against other lineages.

Inter-segmental conflicts between classificatory brothers, or between the men of a sibling group and their mother's classificatory brothers, eventually led to division of the taravād. This could not, however, take place until the men of all generations senior to the disputants were dead. As long as the taravād was obliged to cohere, the formalities associated with age rank between men countered incipient tendencies to segmentary fission. Men were ranked by age irrespective of segment and generation, and the same etiquette of formality and partial avoidance was due an elder own brother as to an elder classificatory brother. Thus the etiquette of age rank not only reduced the dangers of open violence between individual "brothers" of any degree of relationship; it also *enforced* estrangement and social distance between full brothers, who in some contexts might otherwise have huddled together in unseemly amity to plot against their classificatory brothers in other segments of the property group.

SISTERS

Sisters shared many experiences and interests. They played together in childhood and often experienced the tāli ceremony together. As adults they cooked, swept, pounded paddy, harvested, and cared for babies together. Women were in some respects ranked on the basis of age in the same manner as men. All who were older had some authority over all who were younger. A younger sister was not permitted to receive a visiting husband until after one had appeared to claim her elder sister's or elder classificatory sister's favors.

However, the age ranking and authority structure between women was less formal than that between men. Women had no legal authority over one another. All women of a household were legal minors, collectively under the authority of the men of their household, represented by their kāranavan. Women had no place in the caste assembly and might not give evidence in trials. Disputes between women of different households or different lineages were not considered serious matters for public consideration. Women could not legally represent their households in relationships with other households, other castes, or political authorities.

For these reasons older women had only moral authority over juniors. They could not enforce their decisions except by appeal

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favored wife, and that such a man might well arrange for a nephew's first sambandham relationship to be with a daughter of this wife. It seems probable also that such deliberately arranged matrilateral cross-cousin marriages increased in popularity in the nineteenth century, as plural marriages gradually gave place to monogamy. My data suggest also that deliberately arranged patrilateral cross-cousin marriages may have become more popular in the late nineteenth century, as fathers became instrumental in maintaining and educating their sons.[10]

AFFINITY

The members of ego's father's household had less significance to him in their interpersonal relationships than as affines or *bandhukkar* (singular, *bandhu*) of his household as a whole. The bandhus or "joined ones" of a household were acquired through the sambandham relationship. They comprised the current spouses of the property group's members, together with the households from which these people came. *Bandham* (affinity) had no practical significance beyond this range.

Because of the transience of particular marriages, affinal relationships, like those with patrilateral kin, were a matter of etiquette rather than of rights and obligations. Affines of the same caste might visit each other informally and must be received with hospitality. It was also common to invite to the feasts of life-crisis rites the actual spouses of the dwelling group and any close matrilineal kin they might wish to bring with them. Affines, however, had no ceremonial obligations on these occasions and were not under the same categorical obligation to attend as were the representatives of enangar households.

Politeness—masking a greater or lesser degree of covert hostility—characterized affinal relationships in general. A man treated his wife's male elders of senior generations with respect, and stood in their presence unless invited to eat with them. They welcomed him with cordial gravity and with the respect due to his caste status if he were a man of higher caste.

[10] Both types of cross-cousin marriage have however decreased in frequency as a result of the urbanization and mobility of the past thirty years. In one Cochin village in 1949, 7 per cent of living Nayar women had married the father's own or classificatory maternal nephew; less than 2 per cent had married the own or classificatory mother's brother's son. Taking the women of six lineages over five generations, 14 per cent of marriages were to the father's own or classificatory nephew; 9 per cent to the own or classificatory uncle's son. In Walluvanad, of the women of nine lineages over five generations, 11 per cent had married the father's own or classificatory nephew; about 5 per cent, the own or classificatory uncle's son. Patrilateral cross-cousin marriage is of course impossible in hypergamous unions.

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kinsmen and they avoided her except on ceremonial occasions. She had a relationship of mutual courtesy with all of her husband's older kinswomen and was given meticulous respect by her husband's junior kinsfolk of both sexes. The *ammāyi* (mother's brother's wife) and the *chēdatti amma* (elder brother's wife) play a role in Nayar jokes and folk tales somewhat comparable to that of the stepmother in Europe. As was mentioned in connection with witchcraft, junior members of a taravād habitually resented these women's hold over their husbands and represented them as grasping, unscrupulous, and intent on robbing their husbands' juniors. This fear of the mother's brother's wife was however much more pronounced in North Malabar, where marriage was monogamous or polygynous and residence avunculocal.

Co-wives and the wives of brothers, being in different houses, had no institutionalized relationships and apparently very little contact. The husbands of women of a property group also had only slight relationships. There was no structure of authority between them because they performed no activities together. The younger men accorded some deference to the older, but all might sit together informally and exchange news.

Virtually nothing is known of the relationships between co-husbands except the testimony of several writers from the fifteenth to eighteenth centuries that they "agreed very well" with each other. They are said to have distributed the woman's time among them in a convenient manner "according as they can fix a term among themselves" (Hamilton, ed. Penzer, 1930, I: 172).

Among the Nayars of this area, households of the linked lineages or enangar fulfilled the customary obligations and carried out the ceremonial roles which were required of an individual's affinal or matrilateral kin in the patrilineal castes of Kerala. It was enangar who *must* take part in life-crisis rites, make gifts at first menstruation and marriage ceremonies, and come to assist at deaths. Enangar were of course often currently affines of the households in which they officiated, for sambandham relationships took place most intensively between lineages of the local caste group. However, the enangar relationship did not derive from particular sambandham ties nor was it brought about by particular tāli rites. It was rather a hereditary relationship of "perpetual affinity" between lineages as groups, which persisted irrespective of the making and breaking of particular sexual ties. When a man who happened to have sambandham with some woman of a household acted there in his role of enangan, he did so as a representative of his lineage, irrespective of his interpersonal mar-

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613 592 riage tie. Often, the particular persons who officiated as enangar did not happen to be currently having marital relations with any member of that house. This inter-group relationship of ceremonial obligation fitted the fact that particular marital ties were too transient and slender to carry the normal obligations of affinity.

Prerequisites of the Kinship System of Commoners

595 175 It is not definitely known how the institutions of group marriage and linked lineages arose among Central Kerala Nayars. In 1518 Barbosa, writing of the Nayars of Calicut, stated of group marriage: "And it is said that the kings made this law, in order that the Nayars should not be covetous and should not abandon the king's service" (Dames, 1921: 124). Similarly João de Barros wrote at about the same period: "They say that this (polyandry) is a very ancient law among them, and that it springs from the wish of a certain king to relieve the men of the burden of maintaining sons, and leave them ready for warlike [671] service whensoever the king calls upon them" (*ibid.*: 241). Whether or not group marriage was instituted by a particular royal edict, we know that once it had begun it was enforceable by the laws of the Central kingdoms. Thus, according to at least one authority, a chief could compel a woman to receive as marital partners any of her en- [613] angar who wished to visit her (K. Kannan Nair, 1908: 186). The rights and duties of enangar in the administration of caste law were also sanctioned by the chief and, ultimately, by the king.

595 175 184 Considerable literary evidence suggests that a form of group marriage similar to that of Central Kerala existed among Nayars in at least some of the chiefdoms of the kingdom of Travancore in Southern Kerala. K. M. Panikkar, it is true, has argued that Travancore Nayar women were never polyandrous (1918: 270–271). Other Malabari writers, however, responding to Panikkar's statement, have argued convincingly that they were (Aiyappan, 1932*a*, 1932*b*, 1934; Iyer, 1932). K. P. Padmanabha Menon, in particular, supports the view that traditionally Nayar women in both Central and Southern Kerala were "held in common, every woman belonging to all the members of the tribe, and resistance to any of them was severely punished." In support he quotes two early statements concerning the chiefdom of Venmani, with its capital of Kartigapally, in North Travancore. Thus the Portuguese Archbishop Menezes in the mid-sixteenth century reported that "the king of Kartigapally enacted that in his kingdom any Nair was at liberty to be free with any woman of the caste high or low, and that he could kill a woman, with impunity, if she refuses

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595 Leaving aside the problem of origins, however, what I would argue
182 is that the *specific* form of group marriage evolved among Central
701 Kerala Nayars in the period of the native kingdoms was particularly
adapted to their military organization, which in turn was made pos-
[566] sible by the existence of the lower castes of sub-tenants and serfs. The work of the tenants and serfs absolved Nayar men from the duty of maintaining the women and children of either their natal or their conjugal units by their own productive activities. It set free most of these men for a lifetime of military service; in each matrilineal group only one old man was needed at home to organize the work of the household's retainers. Given matrilineal descent and inheritance, and given the mobility of men and the absence of male economic obligations to kinswomen, there was no reason why either men or women should restrict themselves to particular spouses. There was also, as the early European writers realized, a positive value for the kingdom in their not doing so, for plural marriages discouraged soldiers from forming deep attachments to particular wives and children, and encouraged them to focus their loyalty on military leaders and on the matrilineal groups through which they were recruited. At the same time, plural marriages provided the soldiers with ready comforts and a night's lodging both in their own villages and in other villages of the kingdom through which they might pass. Whether or not chiefs regularly enforced indiscriminate mating among Nayar women of their districts in order to strengthen their soldiers' allegiances, a system of group marriage involving optional multiple alliances certainly fitted the way of life of a landed militia, already (for historical reasons)
[178] organized into matrilineal descent groups. A close connection between group marriage and the military organization is further suggested in that, after the British had disbanded the armies in about 1800, although matrilineal descent persisted for over a century, group marriage rapidly died out. Within about thirty years monogamous marriage in Central Kerala, and monogamous or restricted, fraternally polyandrous marriage in Travancore, had become common, and fathers had assumed a definite role in the upbringing of their children.

Kinship in the Aristocratic Matrilineal Castes

THE LINEAGE

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592 Among the retainer Nayars a household whose membership rose above
423 about thirty tended to divide its property between its segments when the senior males who had spanned the segments were dead. Correspondingly, lineages and clans of retainer Nayars went through a grad-

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ual process of fission. This state of affairs was in harmony with the small amounts of land controlled by retainer property groups and with the relatively temporary relationship of retainer Nayars to their land. The conditions of kānam tenure not only allowed for changes in the tenures of plots of land within one village, but even permitted segments of an expanding taravād to change their feudal allegiances and if necessary to hive off from their natal village.

The situation was different in the aristocratic lineages of royalty and district chiefs. By jenmam right they owned large domains which could support greater numbers of members. Their members also had a stake in the political office which they were reluctant to surrender. On the whole these lineages tended to cohere for longer periods than did those of retainers. Some of them today number over three hundred members and trace their descent back to the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. When segments of these lineages did move away from their ancestral lands it was usually because they had been conquered and forced to vacate their territories and offices.

In the beginning, when one of these aristocratic lineages rose to power, it did so as a small property group. It did so either (in the case of royals) through conquest or (in the case of chiefs) through being appointed to office by some royal power. When they acquired office these upstart property groups seem to have severed ties with their former lineages and clans and to have conferred on themselves a higher ritual rank as independent castes.

After a few generations such a property group might expand in numbers and separate out into segments. I lack data on the precise point at which aristocratic property groups segmented; it seems to have been always at a later point with them than with retainer Nayars. (Today, some royal and chiefly property groups have a time depth of eight or more generations and over a hundred members.) When fission did occur the segments moved into separate palaces, each taking a portion of the ancestral domain for its maintenance. The oldest man resident in each segment acted as kāranavan and managed its internal affairs. For a time at least, the political office remained vested in the oldest man of the lineage irrespective of branch. When he was able, he kept a tight hold over all the segments, deflecting part of their income to himself for the upkeep of his palace staff, private army, and the larger forces he mustered through his subordinate vassals in war. The office bearer also retained sole right to the customs dues on trade within his chiefdom or kingdom, and to the tribute from village headmen within his area of rule.

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613 597 eage with which one was neither at enmity nor in regular asymmetrical political relationships. Thus the Travancore royal lineage several times adopted from Kolattiri, at the other end of Kerala, and the Calicut lineage from Nileswaram, the northernmost independent chiefdom of the Malabar Coast.

613 262 564 The giving and receiving of food, normally a hallmark of caste ranking, presented other problems. Some royal lineages were vegetarians and employed Nambudiri Brahman cooks who, being ritually higher than themselves, were permitted to serve them with food. Others seem to have drawn to themselves a small group of lineages as cooks and houseservants upon whom they conferred equivalence of caste rank, while maintaining them as their social inferiors and not intermarrying with them.

613 RESIDENCE AND KINSHIP RELATIONSHIPS

592 593 554 The property groups of village headmen's and chiefly lineages had residential arrangements similar to those of retainer Nayars, except that their houses were larger. The men of these groups visited their lower-ranking wives in the latters' homes. If they lived nearby, visits would occur at night; if at a distance, the husband might visit his wife about once a month and remain for two or three days. Similarly, women of these groups received visits from their higher-ranking husbands at convenient intervals. If he came from a distance the husband brought his own servants and cook, occupied a building near the taravād house, and stayed at his conjugal family's expense.

613 344 554 592 In the royal lineages each property group occupied a large palace. Within it each princess had her own suite of rooms in company with her children under the age of fifteen. Princes over this age had private rooms in a separate wing. The Nambudiri Brahman husbands of princesses (who were younger sons in their own households and had no managerial duties) lived at the palace for the duration of their marriages and were maintained at its expense. In the daytime they occupied a building within the royal courtyard, with its own bathing pool, kitchen, and servants, and visited their wives' rooms mainly at night. Junior princes visited their wives in nearby retainers' households or in more distant chiefly taravāds. Each royal sthāni had his own palace, estate, and retainers for the duration of his office. He would normally bequeath a house to a Nayar wife within the palace grounds and visit her and his children there.

595 554 [586] Although group marriage appears to have existed in theory among aristocrats, polyandry was in fact perhaps less common than among retainer Nayars. Princesses are said to have been sometimes poly-

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marks that "When a high-caste Nayar becomes ripe, he turns into a king."

Low productivity and poor communications perhaps made the exaction of tribute more difficult than in Central Kerala, and this fact, plus the uncertain nature of trade, made the local rulers perennially short of funds. This is probably the reason why, although they were trained for warfare in gymnasia in their villages, Nayars were not regularly conscripted into a national army. Instead, they merely fought sporadically on behalf of local chiefs. Further, chiefs and village headmen were insufficiently strong to bring all the land under their control. Their domains were larger than those of Nayar commoners, but most commoner Nayar property groups were independent small landlords in their own right within their villages. Since they were not full-time warriors and since in many areas they had no serfs, Nayar commoners also did part of their own cultivation on their small estates. Part of their land, however, they leased to Tiyyar tenants as in Central Kerala. The polluting castes of village servants had the same rights and spatial distribution as in Central Kerala. In general, the economic processes of reciprocity and redistribution in villages proceeded in a comparable manner.

As independent warrior-cultivators, the Nayar commoners were not divided into separate castes of retainers owing allegiance as vassals and *kānam* tenants to different kinds of lords. Most villages were nominally under Nayar village headmen. In villages of the Kottayam and Kadattunad kingdoms, both the headman's lineage and those of the Nayar commoners belonged to a large caste called Nambiars, who appear to have intermarried throughout the kingdom. Although of the same general caste as commoners, and not forbidden by religious law from intermarrying equally with commoners, Nambiar village headmen's lineages tended, however, to intermarry only with each other or to take wives only from the commoners, occasionally giving their own women in marriage to chiefs or Brahmans. Chiefs claimed a higher caste rank as Samantan Nambiars, and royalty as Kshattriyas. These aristocratic lineages conducted hypergamous marriages with each other and with Nambudiris as in Central Kerala.

Judicial processes were somewhat less centralized than in the Central kingdoms. At least in theory, grave crimes and civil disputes in urban centers seem to have been tried in royal courts, but most civil disputes inland were apparently tried by local chiefs. Under the chiefs, caste assemblies of neighborhoods took care of crimes against religious law as in the Central kingdoms. Murder among Nayars

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THE PROPERTY GROUP

The property group, a segment of the lineage, was among Nambiar commoners of roughly the same size and internal composition as among the Nayar retainers of Central Kerala. Its members jointly owned both movable and immovable property in the same manner. Its kāranavan managed the estate, had legal guardianship over members, and was legally responsible for them to the local caste assembly and to the chief. All Nayar property groups appear to have owned some garden and rice lands as *jenmis*. In addition some leased land on kānam tenure from chiefs, royalty, or Brahmans if any were present in their village. A property group whose membership was expanding might bring under cultivation waste land belonging to the chief on a tenure known as *kurikānam*. The tenant had the right of occupancy for twelve years without paying rent; he then paid an annual share of produce to the landlord. The improvements he made (trees, houses, etc.) were his own and he could not be evicted without compensation for them.

Residence was ideally *avunculocal*. Plural marriages for women were forbidden, and a man normally brought his wife to live with him on his matrilineal estate for the duration of the marriage. This mode of residence was apparently related to population density and to the sexual division of labor. Some duolocal marriages did exist between partners living in nearby houses in the same village. However, houses and villages were so scattered that most men would have had difficulty in maintaining a visiting relationship with a wife. Matrilocal residence was also disadvantageous because men did much of the work of cultivation on their own estates, were required to defend their estates against invaders, and were mobilized by the chiefs in war on the basis of property-group membership. A few junior men lived matrilocally for short periods, but the kāranavan and most of the adult men lived on their own estates.

In the relatively small property groups of commoners, the dwelling group was thus often an avunculocal extended family. It would comprise a group of brothers, their wives and immature children, their adult sisters' sons, and the wives and small children of these men. Divorced or widowed women born into the property group also had the right of permanent residence there, and married women born into it might return to live there for several weeks or months when they wished.

In the larger property groups of some commoners, village headmen, and chiefs, the main ancestral house might be reserved for

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divorced or widowed women of the group and their children, together with temporarily divorced men or elderly widowers. The kāranavan, his wife, and his immature children would occupy a wing of the ancestral house or a separate building in the same courtyard. Married men of the group would live with their wives and children in separate houses, all on the matrilineal estate. The kāranavan would then allocate separate gardens and rice fields for usufruct to each married man. A junior would often hold such land on kānam tenure from the taravād as a whole. The kāranavan would retain a larger portion of the estate for his own maintenance and that of unmarried persons living in the ancestral house. In any case he retained ultimate management of the whole property and might retract portions of it at will. If, however, a junior man leased new land from the taravād on kurikānam tenure, the improvements he made on it might, by custom although not by law, become the separate property of his mother's matrilineal descendants. If, later, the whole property was divided between major segments of the property group, each branch might take as its share the fields and gardens on which improvements had been made by male members of that branch. In the larger aristocratic taravāds one or two sthānam estates might be set aside for the men immediately junior to the kāranavan. Their holders managed such estates with greater independence than the plots allocated to more junior men. All cultivation was carried on with the aid of Tiyyar laborers attached by hereditary right to the taravād. In some cases also plots were given on sub-tenure to Tiyyar cultivating tenants in the same manner as in Central Kerala.

A man might also—at least in the nineteenth century—with the consent of his own and his wife's kāranavan, lease land on kānam or kurikānam tenure from his wife's taravād. A few junior men actually went to live matrilocally in the wife's ancestral house or in a separate house which they built on the wife's ancestral estate. Houses and improvements to land provided by a husband in this way customarily became the separate property of the wife and her matrilineal descendants. Land on which such improvements had been made also normally passed to the wife's descendants as their share when the whole property of the wife's taravād was finally divided. Matrilocal residence by a junior man was rare and could always be objected to by the man's kāranavan if his services were needed at home. However, a man who was himself a kāranavan had considerable freedom to build a house and develop new gardens on his wife's taravād estate, which would later enrich his wife's matrilineal descendants. If

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the wife's taravād was near his own he might divide his time between his own ancestral house and the private house he had built for his wife and her descendants on her ancestral estate.

Although this was contrary to customary law, some men also managed to give jenmam land outright to a wife and her matrilineal descendants, thus founding a new branch taravād through the wife. This practice greatly increased in the nineteenth century, when new gardens were continually being developed on former waste land and when land became freely marketable. In 1896, indeed, a law was finally passed enabling a man's wife and children to inherit half of his self-acquired intestate property (Malabar Marriage Act, 1896). Occasional gifts of land to the wife and her descendants were, however, known long before the British period, although they were against the law. At the political level, kings and chiefs occasionally gave large domains, together with the office of chief or village headman, to their wives' matrilineal descendants. The chiefships of both Nileswaram and Kadattunad are said to have been formed in this way by gifts from Kolattiri kings before the fourteenth century; both later became virtually independent kingdoms (Logan, 1951, I: 343; Ayyar, 1938: 4). Many smaller territories and political offices were similarly bequeathed during the period of European trade. On a smaller scale, the kāranavan of a Nambiar taravād sometimes managed to take out a portion of the fallow jenmam land of his own taravād, cultivate it, and give it to his wife and her descendants. Naturally, such gifts, which were in no sense a part of acknowledged lawful custom, led to disputes with the donor's matrilineal kin and sometimes, in the next generation, to feuds between lineages.

Gifts of land or improvements by a man to his wife's descendants led to the existence of branch property groups, called *tāvari-taravāds*, within the main property group. After the donor's death the wife's kāranavan might manage such a small estate on behalf of her branch, retaining the income separately for her and her children. More commonly, the donor's eldest son became the kāranavan of the tāvari property, while the branch also continued to receive its ancestral dues out of the property of the taravād as a whole. When a stirpital division of the whole taravād occurred, this branch might claim both its separate estate and its share of the ancestral property. If the donor had been a chief and the gift was large, the branch to which it was given might, however, choose to leave its taravād without taking a share of the ancestral estate and to found a new taravād home on its new land. Tāvari-taravāds were, however, rare among commoners

3:Gough E-4, 5 (1947-1949)1961 AWll Kerala AWll
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until the second half of the nineteenth century. Their existence before 1750 seems to have been chiefly associated with conquest of land by chiefs. After the British conquest they became associated rather with the gradual expansion of the population to newly cultivated lands, and with the ability of men to acquire land as personal and freely marketable property.

Recent Developments in North and Central Kerala Contrasted

The modern North Kerala practice, whereby a man acquires newly cultivated garden land and gives it to his wife and children, makes Nayar residence heterogeneous at the present time. My data come from a village of Kottayam division where, in 1948, the great majority of Nambiar men were small owner- or tenant-cultivators. It was found that out of 42 Nambiar houses, 23 (55 per cent) had been built by individual men and given to their wives and children. Only 45 per cent had been built in the traditional manner by a matrilineally related group of men for their taravād.

Regarding the constitution of households, it was found that 29 per cent were "traditional," avunculocal extended family households comprising matrilineally related men, their wives, and small children, with or without divorced or widowed mothers or sisters of these men; 48 per cent contained an elementary family with or without another relative of either husband or wife—a widowed mother, unmarried sibling, etc.; 14 per cent contained a widow or divorcee with her unmarried children; 7 per cent contained a segment of a lineage —a group of matrilineally related men and women of the Central Kerala type, with the men visiting their wives in other households; 2 per cent (1 house) contained a man whose wife had just died, and the unmarried children.

Taking the residence of the 53 married couples by household, it was found that 26 per cent lived in the traditional manner in the matrilineal home of the husband. Some of these husbands were kāranavans; others lived avunculocally with a mother's brother. Fifteen per cent lived duolocally as in Central Kerala, with the husband visiting the wife. At least half, however, were couples in which the wife had recently had a child and was only temporarily living in her natal home; she would later return to her husband's matrilineal home, thus bringing the total percentage of couples in the husband's matrilineal home up to about 33 per cent. Six per cent lived patrilocally in the husband's father's private house, while 4 per cent lived

3:Gough E-4, 5 (1947-1949)1961 AWll Kerala AWll
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matrilocally in a home with the wife's mother and sometimes with others of her older matrilineal kin. Twenty-six couples (49 per cent) lived neolocally in a house provided by the husband and containing no natal kin of either husband or wife. Of these 26 neolocally resident couples, 6 (11 per cent) lived in a house which the husband had inherited from his dead father; 3 (6 per cent of the total) lived in a house which the husband had obtained from his taravād; 14 (26 per cent) lived in a house newly built by the husband for his wife.

These figures may be contrasted with the modern picture in a Central Kerala village, where the marketability of land and labor have also brought about a partial disintegration of matrilineal descent groups and an emergence of the elementary family as a residential and economic unit. Both in Central and in North Kerala, moreover, marriage has been compulsorily monogamous since the 1930's, men have been legally obliged to maintain their wives and children, and the whole of man's private intestate property has passed to his mother, wife, and children at his death (Madras *Marumakkattāyam* Act, 1933; Cochin Nayar Act, 1933; Nair, 1941: 306). In addition, it has now become legally possible for the members of a taravād to divide their matrilineal ancestral property on a per capita basis. Once the ancestral property has been divided into individual shares in this way it becomes private property in law and is heritable in the same manner as are self-acquisitions. Both in Central and North Kerala, therefore, economic change and resultant modern laws have combined to break down traditional matrilineal descent groups.

In Central Kerala, however, population is denser and there has been less waste land available for individual cultivation. Over the past hundred years, therefore, when individual men have acquired private plots, it has more often been through purchase of already cultivated land than through cultivation of virgin land. Further, Nayar men in Central Kerala, having been a professional militia, tended after the disbanding of their armies either to remain non-cultivating owners and tenants or where possible to move into new forms of salaried employment. Central Kerala today is more urbanized than is North Kerala, so that a much greater proportion of Nayars have salaried work in factories, as clerks, as government servants, as schoolteachers, or in the armed services. Many are unemployed and merely live from their ancestral lands. Particularly among retainer Nayars, who are relatively poor, men have amassed less self-acquired land than was possible for Nayar cultivators in North Kerala. Moreover, because Nayar men are often not themselves the cultivators of

3:Gough E-4, 5 (1947-1949)1961 AWll Kerala AWll
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their land, there has been a tendency—under the new law of division of taravād property—for women and immature children to retain the ancestral houses and much of the land and for men to take their individual shares of the property in cash. Thus, having left their taravāds with their shares, some men now find themselves living in a house owned by the wife and her young children. Other men pool their share of property with that of the wife and jointly buy a new garden and house. When the location of their work permits it, most men remain in their ancestral homes until middle age and visit their wives in the traditional manner.

Modern residential patterns in Central Kerala, although moving in the direction of autonomy for the elementary family, thus show a different bias from that seen in North Kerala. Our contrast is made with data from a Cochin village three miles from a large town, where 75 per cent of Nayars of retainer castes worked for wages in the town. Here, out of 65 high-caste Nayar houses, 40 (61 per cent) had been built by kāranavans for their taravāds in the traditional manner; only 22 per cent had been built by a man for his wife and children, and 11 per cent had been built or bought jointly by husband and wife; 3 per cent had been built by a man for his private use, and 3 per cent by a woman for herself and her children.

Taking the constitution of households, we find that 46 per cent contained matrilineage segments more or less of the traditional type, except that one or more husbands of the women might live regularly in the house. Seventeen per cent contained a "broken" matrilineage segment, the adult men of which had left their natal kinswomen, taken a share of the property in cash, and gone to live with their wives. In these houses the husbands of the remaining women might or might not be living with their wives. Twenty-nine per cent of the households were simple elementary families; 3 per cent contained only one man; 3 per cent contained an extended family composed of some modern mixture of matrilineal and patrilateral kin; and one house contained a widow with her small children.

Taking the residence of married couples by household, we find that out of 100 couples, 58 lived duolocally, the husband dividing his time between his natal home and that of his wife in the traditional manner. In some cases the wife might occasionally move for a few weeks to live in the husband's natal home if circumstances made this particularly desirable. Such an arrangement was however very modern in Central Kerala; it was much disliked by women and was seldom resorted to. Eighteen of the couples lived matrilocally; the couple

3:Gough E-4, 5 (1947-1949)1961 AWll Kerala AWll
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591 shared a home with the wife's mother and sometimes with others of
592 her matrilineal elders. Twenty-four lived neolocally in a house con-
178 taining no natal kinsfolk of either partner; of these 24 couples, 7 lived in a private house acquired by the husband; 11 lived in a house jointly acquired by husband and wife; and 6 lived in a house acquired by the wife.

591 As these figures suggest, duolocality is still the accepted norm of
178 residence for younger married couples in Central Kerala, and avun-
culocality slightly less so for those in North Kerala. In both areas
[434] participation in a market economy has caused a shift toward ne-
olocality, especially for middle-aged couples. In the North Kerala village, however, the modern prevalence of cash-crop farming has
[562] carried this tendency further than has small-scale urban wage work in the village in Cochin. At the same time, because of the coöperation of North Kerala men in cultivation, the male sex normally determines the pattern of residence. Couples live avunculocally, neolocally, or
591 even patrilocally because men must live on their land. In the Cochin
562 village, by contrast, the male shift from military to small-scale salaried
464 employment has only partially undermined the position of women as
178 the sex which remains on the ancestral land and for which the land is cultivated by lower-caste servants. It is still women whose claims, in the majority of cases, determine the choice of residence in Central Kerala. Women, whenever possible, remain on their own land and men adapt themselves to this condition by living duolocally, matrilocally, or in some cases neolocally in a house partly provided by the wife.

Kinship Relationships

613 MATRILINEAL KIN

576 The etiquette of behavior between matrilineal kin was traditionally the same in North as in Central Kerala, but the emphases in terms of rights and obligations were somewhat different.

The kāranavan's ultimate legal authority was much the same as in the Central kingdoms. However, he lacked domestic authority over women and their small children, who resided elsewhere. Among
[591] adults, avunculocal residence caused great emphasis to be placed on the unity of the matrilineally related men, who should coöperate in work and property management for the good of the taravād as a whole. Covertly, their relationships tended to be rivalrous and hostile. Open disputes between them were often avoided through the separate allocation of plots to individual men. The distance thus created be-

3:Gough E-4, 5 (1947-1949)1961 AWll Kerala AWll
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605 836 837 oblivious of these affairs. If the husband found out he might keep quiet or might divorce his wife, but he would not be likely to take vengeance.

AFFINES

602 576 184 The etiquette of behavior between affines was practically identical in North and Central Kerala, but in the North they had recognized obligations.

602 592 613 [593] During her marriage a woman became partly integrated into her husband's property group. Her husband could request her to cook and do limited domestic work for any of his matrilineal kin. She would do so regularly if she lived in an avunculocal extended family. In such households there was a certain authority structure between the wives of matrilineally related men, based on the relative age of the husbands. The oldest woman directed the group and the younger ones should obey her. Matters went most smoothly when a woman was the mother of her husband's niece-in-law. Older women in avunculocal households did not, however, have the unequivocal authority over junior wives which is found in the patrilocal extended families of the higher patrilineal castes of India. They would never beat a girl and usually courted her affection. If the young wife was dissatisfied she might urge her husband to move to a separate house, go home for long periods, or even seek a divorce.

In strict avunculocal residence the kāranavan's wife had domestic authority, keeping the keys of storerooms and directing the younger wives. However, if any woman born into the taravād returned to live in it she could demand the internal management of the home as [578] a right. The relations between a woman and her husband's sisters and [607] nieces were thus often strained. Soon after such a natal kinswoman returned to her home in this way, the kāranavan would try to move his [604] wife into a separate building to avoid feminine disputes. However, a younger wife often lived for several years in the same house with her husband's widowed mother and was expected to obey her with good grace.

602 613 A woman and her husband's older matrilineal kinsmen avoided one another—except on ceremonial occasions—because of incest prohibitions. She was accorded meticulous respect by her husband's younger matrilineal kin, who usually feared and resented her influence over her husband. Gruesome proverbs told of the tortures which men and women would like to inflict on the wives of their elder brothers and [604] uncles, and it was said that "If the uncle's wife and nephews sit down peaceably together, *nux vomica* and bitter gourds will turn to honey."

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Nayar

royal lineage. The retainer sub-castes disputed for rank and, in their separate villages, held the same rights of administration over the lower castes. In all these sub-castes, including the royal lineage, men were trained from the age of seven as soldiers in village gymnasia headed by military leaders (Asāns), and formed a permanent, mobile militia of the kingdom. Below the retainer sub-castes in rank came the small, non-military Nayar servant sub-castes of oil-mongers, funeral-priests, washermen, and barbers.[1] Quite apart from these Brahman and Nayar sub-castes, in a separate area of the village lived the lower patrilineal castes of tenants and menials and the lowest, 'exterior' castes of serfs.

The Nayar Kinship System. The Nayar lineage (*tarawād*) is exogamous and matrilineal kinship terms are extended throughout its range. Its members are united by the observance of fifteen days' ritual pollution at a birth or death, and traditionally by worship of the spirits of dead heads of the lineage, and of a group of totemic snakes. The lineage is divided into small segments, which I call property-groups, each three to five generations deep. Each group is headed by its eldest man (*kāranavan*) who is the legal guardian of its members and controls their property.

The property-group was also until recently the dwelling-group. Residence was, and is still in some houses, uxorilocal: a husband visits his wife after supper and leaves before breakfast. Traditionally, a woman might have any number of lovers of appropriate sub-caste, and a man any number of mistresses. This custom of combined polyandrous and polygynous unions, besides being consistent with a strong matrilineal lineage system, was almost certainly associated with the occupation of Nayar men as soldiers, since it began to die out shortly after the armies were disbanded, about 1810, and a hundred years before the lineage showed signs of disintegration.

The rules of mating were as follows. Sex relations were prohibited within the lineage, and with more than one man or one woman of the same lineage. The Nayar servant sub-castes of oil-mongers, funeral-priests, washermen, and barbers were endogamous, as were all the lower patrilineal castes and the serf-castes. Within the range of military and ruling sub-castes (except for the royal lineages which admitted no peers), all unions were permissible outside the lineage and the range of prohibited affines, and within the sub-caste. Furthermore, these sub-castes were knit together by 'hypergamous' unions between women of lower and men of higher sub-caste. Members of the three retainer sub-castes, which disputed for rank, had only temporary and sporadic sex-relations across sub-caste boundaries. These took place during war when soldiers were permitted to contravene the normal rules against dining with or touching members of other retainer sub-castes and might enter each others' houses in order to eat and sleep. More permanent relationships were encouraged between women of the retainer sub-castes and Kiriyattil, Sāmantan, royal, or Nambūdiri men; between Kiriyattil women and Sāmantan, royal, or Nambūdiri men; between Sāmantan women and royal or Nambūdiri men; and between royal women and Nambūdiri men. The royal lineages, acknowledging no others as peers, were obliged to marry all their women upwards and all their men downwards. The Walluvanād and Cochin princesses married Nambūdiri men, the princes Sāmantan, Kiriyattil, or retainer-women. The Zamorins at first married only some of their women to Nambūdiris, and the rest to men of the more ancient royal lineages of Beypore, Bettem, and Kodungalur, all of whom had been conquered by the Zamorins and made honoured vassals in their kingdom. At some time in the 18th century, the Zamorin's lineage gave up this practice and began to marry its women only to Nambūdiris, while continuing to marry its men to Sāmantan, Kiriyattil, and retainer-Nayar women.

[1] Respectively called Vettukads, Attikurrsis (Chidigans in Cochin), Velutheddans, and Vilakkatalavans. The small temple-servant castes who rank between Nambūdiris and Nayars and were also concerned in hypergamous marriages are for lack of space excluded from this discussion.

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595 564 [184] responsibility to support their wives and children from their family property. Whether it was introduced by the Nambuthiris, it is difficult to believe; and it is to be noted, that it was prevailing to a considerable extent in North Malabar, among whom and other low castes their influence was less than in South Malabar and the Cochin State.

83 564 The *Smriti*[1] says, "the Sudras' appointed path to Heaven is serving the Brahmans". "The practice of Brahmans, Kshatriyas and Vaisyas, having sexual intercourse with the servile women is in accordance with the *sástrás*. If a Brahman wish to have sexual intercourse with a Sudra wife, the Sudra is bound to gratify the wish. A Sudra cannot be sure of the true parentage of his children". Again, before the Malabar Marriage Commission, the Zamorin Maharaja Bahadur, Ettan Thampuran Avergal, a learned Sanskrit scholar, Kolattúr Váriar and other respectable witnesses unanimously deposed, that, in Kerala, a non-Brahman or *marumakkathíyam* woman need not be chaste, and she is not forbidden to consort with more than one man. To such teachings of the learned and influential leaders [178] of the orthodox community, the Nayars of these days will no longer submit.

595 701 Another important theory connects the practice with the military organisation of the Nayar community. Montaigue was evidently of opinion, that it was introduced, because the Nayar leaders looked upon an army of bachelors as the most effective instrument in war.[2] The subjection of the males of [833] a whole race from the earliest youth to the decline of manhood must therefore have been the cause of the fugitive connection and promiscuous intercourse.

174 595 European writers, such as Baron Avebury, Meyr, Mc. Linan, and others, have arrived at the conclusion, that the system of inheritance now prevalent among the Nayars must have originated from a type of polyandry resembling free love. In [591] ancient times, the rule was that the wife should remain in [592] her own house and be visited by her husband, and that the eldest female was at the head of the house, which was afterwards transferred to the eldest male. The part of man in the [842] function of generation passed as of secondary importance or as

1. Malabar Marriage Commission Report, page 17.
2. Essays of Michael Montaigue.

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Sivagothrakár (worshippers or followers of Siva), would seem to indicate that they reverence Siva more than Vishnu.

A Nayar tarawad or marumakkathayam family.

"No people" says Elie Reclus, "have more fully appreciated the maternal family, nor developed it more logically than the Nayars, despite the accumulated obstacles thrown in its way by a race admirably intelligent and moreover victorious."[1] The *tarawád* or *marumakkathayam* family consists in theory of all persons who can trace their descent in the female line from a single ancestress. In its simplest form it is one which consists of mother and her children, living together with their maternal uncle, that is the mother's brother, as *káranavan* or the senior male member of the family. In its complex form it consists of a mother and all her children, both male and female, all her grand children by her daughters, all her brothers and sisters and the descendants on the sisters' side,—in short, all the relatives of the woman on the female side, however distant their relationship, living together in the same block of buildings, dining together in the same hall and enjoying all the property in common. No descendant through the male line can be a member of such a family. There are at present instances of families containing a hundred or more members who live in one or more buildings situated in a large compound and who are the descendants of one woman separated perhaps by generations of descent, and yet able to trace their common descent from one ancestress.

In such a family the woman senior to others in age was originally mistress or head of the family, and she reigned or governed. Her eldest daughter was prime minister in the family, and through her all orders were transmitted to her little world. The son recognised the priority of the mother before whom he did not even venture to seat himself, unless she had given him permission. The brother obeyed the elder sister, and respected the younger ones. In fact, the affection between brother and sister was a feeling that endured, while conjugal love was but a passing sentiment. The wives of brothers and sons held but a secondary position in the family. The Nayars loved their families more than anything else in the world, and made it the end of their existence. Like all Hindus they held reprehensible the man who

1. Primitive folk, page 159.

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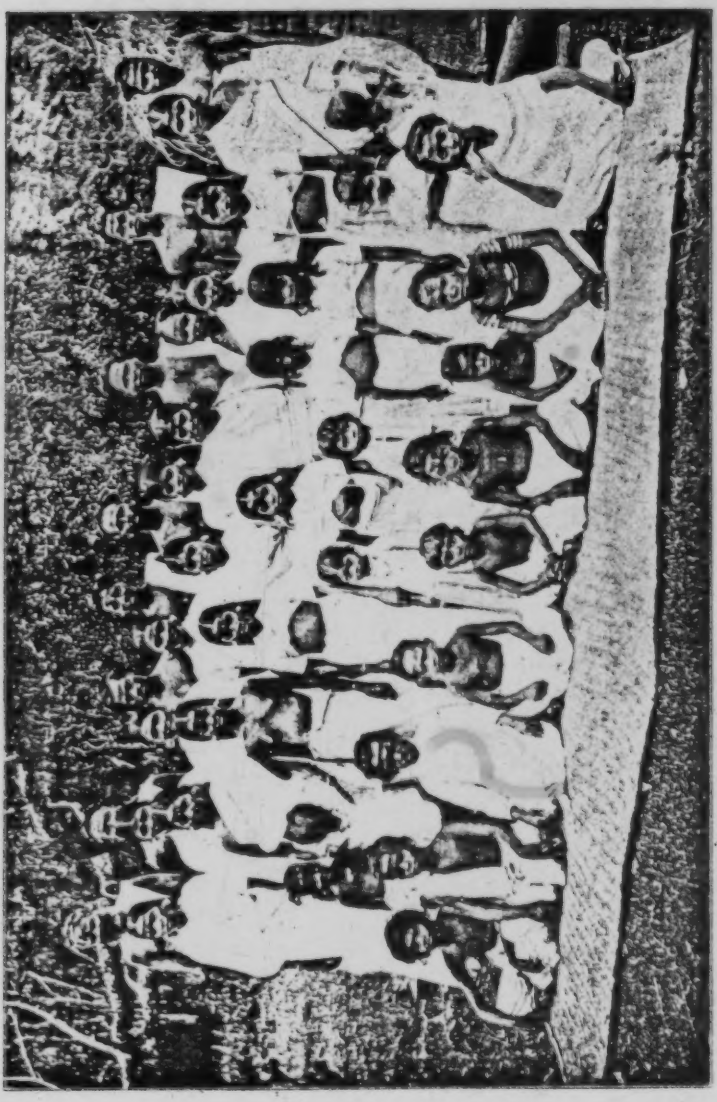

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A TYPICAL NAYAR FAMILY

[facing p. 47]

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deliberately refused to be a father and deprived himself of the sweet cares involved by the rearing of the children, they were indignant with a girl who refused to be a mother, and those who had not reproduced their species were considered to be subject to terrible punishments in the next world. The old order of things has given place to the new. Many of the old time-honoured customs have already disappeared or begun to disappear. The senior woman is no longer the head of the family, and she has given place to the eldest male member who is known as *kâranavan*. In a joint family which contains a large or fairly a large number of females and males, the former with their children occupy the main building or buildings and the latter live apart in another edifice close to and separated from them. Each of the married women has a room or two; and here her husband visits her. The old women and others occupy the common portion of the house. The boys under age live with their mother under whose care they always are, and the father as a casual visitor does not generally concern himself with the rearing of children. These, after coming of age, join the the adult members, and if they can afford it, live in houses of their own with their wives and children. Where the domestic environments are favourable and the influence of the *kâranavan* (as the father in a patriarchal family) and other senior member prevails, the junior members seldom go wrong. In some cases where such influences do not exist, their conduct is not always satisfactory. The habits of the members are generally regular, and the usual time of rising throughout the year is early dawn. After rising, the males either go to their daily routine, or wait for their morning light meal which they partake after bathing and after worshipping the deity in the local temple. The women attend to their children, look to the domestic minor work, bathe and prepare the breakfast. Great attention is paid to their personal cleanliness. As water is near at hand, men, women, and children take a great pleasure in bathing, which, besides being conducive to cleanliness, is also considered purificatory and curative. Their substantial dinner is, as a rule, a little before midday, and the rest of the day is occupied by the women and others either in the perusal of religious books or in the playing of some indoor game, while visits in the afternoon are also indulged in.

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are also indulged in. In these days of modern civilization, when schools for boys and girls have increased in the State, many take advantage of the instruction imparted in them, so that when the latter become adults, they profitably spend their leisure hours in reading religious and other books. Towards the evening they go to the temple for worshipping and go round it several times, which, though hygienic in its origin, is considered of religious importance. They return home, and their supper is generally before eight o'clock; after this they retire to their rooms, each married woman occupying her separate room or set of rooms. They lie on mats or beds spread on the floor or on the latter placed on cots with which the rooms are neatly furnished. Such in brief is the family life and organisation of well-to-do families of the Nayars. In poor families in which the members subsist by hard work, the daily routine of life considerably differs from those described above.

Mention has already been made of the *káranavan*, who is the manager of all affairs in the Nayar family. He is legally responsible for the proper management of the joint property, for the education of the junior members and for everything conducive to the general welfare and happiness of every member of the family. It must be remembered that the family property is joint property and that no member can claim that any portion of it belongs to him or to her, nor can any individual member claim a separate possession or enjoyment of any portion. The ground-work of the system is, that the family property is held in trust for the support of the females and their descendants in the female line. The property is impartible and the family is indissoluble except with the consent of all its members. When, in course of time, the family becomes too unwieldy to be governed and managed by one man, the circumstances and natural forces bring about a division of the family into various distinct sections or families. These separate families keep up the original traditions of their common descent, but have no legal right to the property of one another. The members of the family and their descendants in the female line, thus separated by partition from the main stock, form a *távazhi* (*ta*=mother, *vazhi*=line, *i. e.*, mother's line). They live in a separate building and own that portion of the joint property which is theirs in the partition, and which is managed

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by the woman's brother or some other senior member as *kāranavan*.

There are some who love and admire the system, and they depict the *tarawād* as a group of males and females bound together by the sacred tie of common descent from one ancestors' grand-mother. "The females have only to follow the natural instinct to be fruitful and to multiply, while the males, free from all care for their own progeny, are expected to labour like the honey bee for the common good of the *tarawād*-hive, and pour their earnings into the lap of the venerable *kāranavan*, who, in the exercise of absolute discretion, administers the income for the benefit of all. Protected by the impartibility of the estate, refreshed by the acquisitions of the junior members, and under the beneficent sway of the senior male, the *tarawād* would rise high and endure through generations."[1] The advantages of such a complete joint family system are three-fold: firstly, the genial society it affords, the closest association of young and old, and the abundant opportunity for recreation and instruction; secondly, in the process of production many of the advantages of concerted labour are secured, as is obvious, without carelessness, dishonesty or misdirected production and consumption; and thirdly, there is the remarkable saving in the process of consumption. The freedom and independence of Nayar women, their influence in the family and the absence of conventional restrictions, such as child marriage, enforced widowhood and the other customs which exercise so baneful an influence upon Hindu society elsewhere are other advantages that add to the excellence of the Nayar system of life.

The system above described, may have worked smoothly enough in former days; but in these days of civilization, with the growing wants of the members, coupled with the indifference and selfishness of the *kāranavan* and the other members, the joint family tends to disintegration. At a certain point the mere increase of the members renders it intolerable for them all to live together under one roof, and when that stage is reached, the *tarawād* splits up into *tāvazhis*, each containing a mother, her brothers and her children.

It is to the woman that the fortune of the family belongs, and yet she is not the mistress of the house but only one

1. Malabar Marriage Commission Report, page 44.

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of many joint members dependent on the *káranavan*. The females and the junior members pass their lives in utter discontent and misery, if the *káranavan* happens to be unsympathetic and tyrannical. The father is not the legal guardian of his children, for whose training and education the *káranavan* is responsible. In families, where there are many boys and girls, the chances are that he educates none of them, on the plea that he cannot afford to educate them all, nor can he make any invidious distinction. The family, in certain cases, becomes the seat of envy, hatred and dissensions, and not a day passes without some dispute or other among the members. It is said that with the advancement of civilization the system becomes more and more unworkable; it offends against every principle of economy, healthy life and natural affection. By freeing a man from the obligation of maintaining his wife and children, it sanctions the reckless propagation of species, destroys the motive power for prudence and foresight, forces up the population to the very point where it must be kept down by actual want of means of subsistence. It "huddles together" as a family a number of distant relatives not necessarily drawn to each other by any bond of natural affection. It makes home life impossible, for the father is a casual visitor, and mother and children are but units in a heterogeneous flock, dependent on a practically irresponsible guardian, who from a mere accident of his being the eldest of the flock is expected to be able to regard every member with an impartial eye, and at the same time preserve the interests of his wife and children.[1] These causes are at work and tend to divide the families into several branches in the direction of *távashis* by partition. Fortunately, in the Cochin State, such evils as those above described are of rare occurrence, for partition is effected as early as the symptoms of disunion and ill-feeling among the members are visible.

1. Malabar Marriage Commission Report, page 48.

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[P.52]

CHAPTER III.

THE SUDRAS OF COCHIN.

A. THE HIGH CASTE SUDRAS (NAYARS)

(Continued).

592 613 611 Inheritance. The Nayars follow the *marumakkathâyam* law of succession, *i. e.*, the law which regulates succession through the female line. The senior male member called the *kâranavan* is entitled to the full possession of the property, and is absolute in its management. The junior members, on the other hand, have a claim to residence and maintenance in the family house. They cannot call for an account except as an incident to a prayer for the removal of the manager for gross misconduct, nor claim any specific share of the income, nor even require that the maintenance provided for them should be in proportion to the income of the *tarawâd*. An absolute discretion in this direction is vested in the manager who is the legal guardian of every member of the family.[1] He is not accountable to any member in the *tarawâd* in respect of its income, nor can a suit be maintained for an account of the *tarawâd* property in the absence of fraud on his part. He is under no obligation to support any member of his *tarawâd* by his own labour or from his self-acquisitions. The only restraint on him in the management is, that he cannot alienate the lands of the family except with the consent of all the other members and without proper necessity.[2] If a family has so far increased in the number of its members that they cannot conveniently live under the same roof any longer, it divides itself with the consent of the senior member into *tâvazhis* to each of which is assigned a portion of the property for maintenance, and such *tâvazhis* may reside in separate houses or farm-houses belonging to the family and appropriating from the lands newly assigned to them an income sufficient to maintain themselves. In the partition of

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1. Vide Mayne's Hindu Law, sec. 268.
2. I. L. R. II, Mad. 328.

9:Iyer E-4, 5 (ca. 1902-1906) 1912
AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

a Nayar *tarawád*, all the members are equally entitled to a share. The self-acquisitions of each member of a *tarawád* are at his absolute disposal during his life-time, but this right lapses to the *tarawád* on his death.[1] In families where the *káranavans* look after the welfare of each individual member and the savings of the junior members go to increase the wealth of the family, there is peace and prosperity. Such families are rarely found in these days. Times are changed, as also the conditions of the community, and the old and large families are disappearing through mismanagement. In the majority of cases, when the senior member takes up the management, he is too old and unfit to govern a score of men and women younger than himself and bound to him by no natural tie of affection. He often becomes a mere puppet in the hands of an unscrupulous but stronger member while the other members of the *tarawád* suffer from the injustice consequent under such circumstances. In some cases he misappropriates the family property and alienates it in favour of his wife and children, and the gross acts of spoliation carried on by *káranavan* have reduced some of the respectable families in Malabar and elsewhere to poverty and misery. It is also said, that the junior members are disobedient and do not work for the common good and this state of things is also common everywhere. Another cause for the downfall of the ancient family system is the growing disinclination among its junior members to work for the common good of the *tarawád* and their dislike to the rule of the *káranavan*.[2]

The Nayars who follow this *marumakkathíyam* law of inheritance include nearly all the aristocracy of the country, but the notion that every *tarawád* has an estate sufficient to feed an indefinite number of souls is unfounded and erroneous. Most of the families are poor, and the *káranavans* are mere tenant farmers cultivating a few acres of land on a precarious tenure, and a law which requires such a man, from the produce of his farm, to feed and provide for all the descendants of his female relatives from the time of their birth to their death, whether they work or not, is one of those laws which continue to exist in name but are actually disregarded in practice.[3]

Tribal organisations.

In ancient times the rulers of Cochin held supreme sway in the territories which belonged to them. There were no regular councils, nor assemblies;

1. II, Mad. H. C. R. 162.
2 and 3. Malabar Marriage Commission Report, pages 49-51.

Chapter 5

Fisheries

433 226 KERALA IS THE leading fish producing State in India. Its present production of fish amounts to about 310,000 tons. Maharashtra comes next with an output of 210,000 tons. Over 80 per cent (260,000 tons) of the fish landings are obtained from the sea and the rest from inland sources. About 75,000 tons of fish (70,000 tons cured and 5,000 tons fresh) are at present annually exported to other parts of the country, and 2,000 tons (frozen and canned) are sent abroad. Allowing for a very negligible import, the net quantity available for local use comes to 235,000 tons per annum.

262 [171] 5.2 Fish eating is popular in this State. About four-fifths of the population are accustomed to taking fish regularly. At present the per capita consumption of fish in the State is 41.30 lbs. per year for the fish eating population and 33.00 lbs. per year for the total population, as against 9.50 lbs. and 6.10 lbs. respectively for India as a whole.

433 226 [461] [511] [434] [592] 5.3 About 85,000 persons (1.60 % of total labour force) are directly engaged in fishing activities and they produce a net output of Rs. 5.60 crores (1.60 % of State income). The standard of living of an average fisherman in Kerala is very depressed. The average annual income of a fisherman's household in Kerala, consisting of 6.40 members, is estimated at Rs. 542, or only Rs. 85 per fisherman, that is, about one-third of the average per capita income in the State.

PRESENT STATUS OF FISHERIES

Marine Fisheries

5.4 *Coastal Fisheries*: Although Kerala has a comparatively short coastline (10% of all-India) Kerala ranks first in the production of marine fish (about 30% of all-India Production—Table 25). Large marine fish catch can probably be attributed to the much more intensive fishing effort made in Kerala. In 1957, the ratio of man-hours per mile of coastline came to about five times the average for other States. This heavy fishing pressure is paralleled by the high pressure of population on land, leading to an intensive use of the natural resources. Intensive fishing is not only confined to the number of hours of fishing put in, but it also includes the use of more efficient methods. It will be seen from Table 26 that the catch per man-hour of fishing in Kerala compares favourably with that in the other States.

[Tables 25 & 26, appearing on p. 288, have not been processed -- Ed.]